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MEMOIRS

OF

MADAME LA MARQUISE DE MONTESPAN

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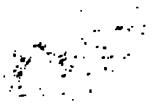
Mme de Montespay.



MEMOIRS

OF

MADAME LA MARQUISE

DE

MONTESPAN

NOW FIRST TRANSLATED INTO ENGLISH

LELAND STANFORD JUNIOR UNIVERSITY

IN TWO VOLUMES—VOLUME I

LONDON

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PUBLISHERS' NOTE

As the seventh work in our COLLECTION OF COURT MEMOIRS, we present our readers with the first English translation of the Memoirs of Louis XIV.'s fascinating favourite, Madame de Montespan.

The Translator's Preface will be found to contain particulars of the contents of these two volumes.

The next work, being the eighth of the series, will be "The Secret Memoirs of the Court of St. Petersburg, particularly towards the end of the reign of Catherine II. and commencement of that of Paul I., forming a description of the manners of St. Petersburg towards the close of the eighteenth century."

LONDON, 10*th June*, 1895.

TRANSLATOR'S PREFACE

HISTORIANS have on the whole dealt somewhat harshly with the fascinating Madame de Montespan, perhaps taking their impressions from the judgments, often narrow and malicious, of her contemporaries. To help us to get a fairer estimate, her own "Memoirs," written by herself, and now first given to readers in an English dress, should surely serve. Avowedly compiled in a vague, desultory way, with no particular regard to chronological sequence, these random recollections should interest us, in the first place, as a piece of unconscious self-portraiture. The cynical Court lady, whose beauty bewitched a great King, and whose ruthless sarcasm made duchesses quail, is here drawn for us in vivid fashion by her own hand; and, while concerned with depicting other figures she really portrays her own. Certainly, in these Memoirs she is generally content to keep herself in the background, while giving us a faithful picture of the brilliant Court at which she was for long the most lustrous ornament. It is only by stray touches, a casual remark, a chance phrase, that we, as it were, gauge her temperament in all its wiliness, its

egoism, its love of supremacy, and its shallow worldly wisdom. Yet it could have been no ordinary woman that held the handsome Louis so long her captive. The fair Marquise was more than a mere leader of wit and fashion. If she set the mode in the shape of a petticoat, or devised the sumptuous splendours of a garden-fête, her talent was not merely devoted to things frivolous and trivial. She had the proverbial *esprit des Mortemart.* Armed with beauty and sarçasm, she won a leading place for herself at Court, and held it in the teeth of all detractors.

Her beauty was for the King; her sarcasm for his courtiers. Perhaps little of this latter quality appears in the pages bequeathed to us, written, as they are, in a somewhat cold, formal style; and we may assume that her much-dreaded irony resided in her tongue rather than in her pen. Yet we are glad to possess these pages, if only as a reliable record of Court life during the brightest period of the reign of Louis Quatorze.

As we have hinted, they are more, indeed, than this. For if we look closer we shall perceive, as in a glass, darkly, the contour of a subtle, even a perplexing, personality.

P. E. P.

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MEMOIRS

OF

MME. LA MARQUISE DE MONTESPAN

CHAPTER I

THE REASON FOR WRITING THESE MEMOIRS— GABRIELLE D'ESTRÉES.

THE reign of the King who now so happily and so gloriously rules over France will one day exercise the talent of the most skilful historians. But these men of genius, deprived of the advantage of seeing the great Monarch whose portrait they fain would draw, will search everywhere among the souvenirs of contemporaries and base their judgments upon our testimony. It is this great consideration which has made me determined to devote some of my hours of leisure to narrating, in these accurate and truthful Memoirs, the events of which I myself am witness.

Naturally enough, the position which I fill at the great theatre of the Court has made me the object of much false admiration, and much real satire. Many men who owed to me their elevation or their success have defamed me; many women have belittled my position after vain efforts to secure the King's regard. In what I now write, scant notice will be taken of all such ingratitude. Before my establishment at Court, I had met with hypocrisy of this sort in the world. And a man must, indeed, be reckless of expense who daily entertains at his board a score of insolent detractors.

I have too much wit to be blind to the fact that I am not precisely in my proper place. But, all things considered, I flatter myself that posterity will let certain weighty circumstances tell in my favour. An accomplished Monarch, to greet whom the Queen of Sheba would have come from the uttermost ends of the earth, has deemed me worthy of his entertainment, and has found amusement in my society. He has told me of the esteem which the French have for Gabrielle d'Estrées, and, like that of Gabrielle, my heart

has let itself be captured, not by a great king, but by the most honest man of his realm.

To France, Gabrielle gave the Vendôme, to-day our support. The Princes, my sons, give promise of virtues as excellent, and will be worthy to aspire to destinies as noble. It is my desire, and my duty, to give no thought to my private griefs begotten of an ill-assorted marriage. May the King ever be adored by his people ; may my children ever be beloved and cherished by the King ; I am happy, and I desire to be so.

CHAPTER II

THAT WHICH OFTEN IT IS BEST TO IGNORE—A MARRIAGE SUCH AS ONE CONSTANTLY SEES—IT IS TOO LATE.

My sisters thought it of extreme importance to possess positive knowledge as to their future condition and the events which fate held in store for them. They managed to be secretly taken to a woman famed for her talent in casting the horoscope. But, on seeing how overwhelmed by chagrin they both were after consulting the oracle, I felt fearful as regarded myself, and determined to let my star take its own course, heedless of its existence, and allowing it complete liberty.

My mother occasionally took me out into society after the marriage of my sister, de Thianges; and I was not slow to perceive that there was in my person something slightly superior to the average intelligence—certain qualities of distinction which

drew upon me the attention and the sympathy of men of taste. Had any liberty been granted to it, my heart would have made a choice worthy alike of my family and of myself. They were eager to impose the Marquis de Montespan upon me as a husband; and, albeit he was far from possessing those mental perfections and cultured charm which alone make an indefinite period of companionship endurable, I was not slow to reconcile myself to a temperament which, fortunately, was very variable, and which thus served to console me on the morrow for what had troubled me to-day.

Hardly had my marriage been arranged and celebrated than a score of the most brilliant suitors expressed, in prose and in verse, their regret at having lost beyond recall Mademoiselle de Tonnai-Charente. Such elegiac effusions seemed to me unspeakably ridiculous; they should have explained matters earlier, while the lists were still open. For persons of this sort I conceived aversion, who were actually so clumsy as to dare to tell me that *they had forgotten* to ask my hand in marriage.

CHAPTER III

MADAME DE MONTESPAN AT THE PALACE—M. DE MONTESPAN—HIS INDISCREET LANGUAGE—HIS ABSENCE—SPECIMEN OF HIS WAY OF WRITING—A REFRACTORY COUSIN—THE KING INTERFERES—M. DE MONTESPAN A WIDOWER—AMUSEMENT OF THE KING—CLEMENCY OF MADAME DE MONTESPAN.

THE Duke and Duchess of Navailles had long been friends of my father's and of my family. When the Queen-mother proceeded to form the new household of her niece and daughter-in-law, the Infanta, the Duchess de Navailles, chief of the ladies-in-waiting, bethought herself of me, and soon the Court and Paris learnt that I was one of the six ladies in attendance on the young Queen.

This Princess, who while yet at the Escurial had been made familiar with the notable names of the French monarchy, honoured me during the journey by alluding in terms of regard to the

Mortemarts and Rochechouarts, kinsmen of mine. She was even careful to quote matters of history concerning my ancestors. By such marks of good sense and goodwill I perceived that she would not be out of place at a Court where politeness of spirit and politeness of heart ever go side by side, or, to put it better, where these qualities are fused and united.

M. le Marquis de Montespan, scion of the old house of Pardaillan de Gondrin, had preferred what he styled "my grace and beauty" to the most wealthy *partis* of France. He was himself possessed of wealth, and his fortune gave him every facility for maintaining at Court a position of advantage and distinction.

At first the honour which both Queens were graciously pleased to confer upon me gave my husband intense satisfaction. He affectionately thanked the Duke and Duchess of Navailles, and expressed his most humble gratitude to the two Queens and to the King. But it was not long before I perceived that he had altered his opinion.

The love-affair between Mademoiselle de la Vallière and the King having now become public,

M. de Montespan condemned this attachment in terms of such vehemence that I perforce felt afraid of the consequences of such censure. He talked openly about the matter in society, airing his views thereanent. Impetuously and with positive hardihood, he expressed his disapproval in unstinted terms, criticising and condemning the Prince's conduct. Once, at the ballet, when within two feet of the Queen, it was with the utmost difficulty that he could be prevented from discussing so obviously unfitting a question, or from sententiously moralising upon the subject.

All at once the news of an inheritance in the country served to occupy his attention. He did all that he could to make me accompany him on this journey. He pointed out to me that it behoved no young wife to be anywhere without her husband. I, for my part, represented to him all that in my official capacity I owed to the Queen. And as at that time I still loved him heartily (M. de Montespan, I mean), and was sincerely attached to him, I advised him to sell off the whole of the newly-inherited estate to some worthy member of his own family, so that he

might remain with us in the vast arena wherein I desired and hoped to achieve his rapid advance.

Never was there man more obstinate or more self-willed than the Marquis. Despite all my friendly persuasion, he was determined to go. And when once settled at the other end of France, he launched out into all sorts of agricultural schemes and enterprises, without even knowing why he did so. He constructed roads, built windmills, bridged over a large torrent, completed the pavilions of his castle, replanted coppices and vineyards, and, besides all this, hunted the chamois, bears and boars of the Nébouzan and the Pyrenees. Four or five months after his departure I received a letter from him of so singular a kind that I kept it in spite of myself, and in the Memoirs it will not prove out of place. Far better than any words of mine, it will depict the sort of mind, the logic, and the curious character of the man who was my husband.

"MONTESPAN, *May 15th*, 1667.

"I count more than ever, madam, upon your journey to the Pyrenees. If you love me, as all your letters assure me, you should promptly take a good

coach and come. We are possessed of considerable property here, which of late years my family have much neglected. These domains require my presence, and my presence requires yours. Enough is yours of wit or of good sense to understand that.

"The Court is, no doubt, a fine country—finer than ever under the actual reign. The more magnificent the Court is, the more uneasy do I become. Wealth and opulence are needed there; and to your family I never figured as a Crœsus. By dint of order and thrift, we shall ere long have satisfactorily settled our affairs; and I promise you that our stay in the Provinces shall last no longer than is necessary to achieve that desirable result. Three, four, five—let us say, six years. Well, that is not an eternity! By the time we come back we shall both of us still be young. Come, then, my dearest Athénais, come and make closer acquaintance with these imposing Pyrenees, every ravine of which is a landscape and every valley an Eden. To all these beauties, yours is missing; you shall be here, like Dian, the goddess of these noble forests. All our gentlefolk await you, admiring your picture on the sweetmeat-box. They are minded to hold many pleasant festivals in your honour; you may count upon having a veritable Court. Here it is that you will meet the old Béarnais nobility that followed Henri Quatre and placed the sceptre in his hand. Messieurs de Grammont and de Biron are our neighbours; their grim castles dominate the whole district, so that they seem like kings.

"Our Château de Montespan will offer you some-

thing less severe; the additions, made for my mother twenty years ago, are infinitely better than anything that you will leave behind you in Paris. We have here the finest fruits that ever grew in any earthly paradise. Our huge, lustrous peaches are composed of sugar, violets, carnations, amber and jessamine; strawberries and raspberries grow everywhere; and naught may vie with the excellence of the water, the vegetables, and the milk.

"You are fond of scenery, and of sketching from Nature; there are half-a-dozen landscapes here for you that leave Claude Lorrain far behind. I mean to take you to see a water-fall, twelve hundred and seventy feet in height, neither more nor less. What are your fountains at Saint-Germain and Chambord compared with such marvellous things as these?

"Now, madam, I am really tired of coaxing and flattering you, as I have done in this letter and in preceding ones. Do you want me, or do you not? Your position as Court lady, so you say, keeps you near the Monarch; ask, then, or let me ask, for leave of absence. After having been for four consecutive years *Lady of the Palace*, consent to become *Lady of the Castle*, since your duties towards your spouse require it. The young King, favourite as he is with the ladies, will soon find ten others to replace you. And I, dearest Athénais, find it hard even to think of replacing you, in spite of your cruel absence, which at once annoys and grieves me. I am—no, I shall be—always and ever yours, when you are always and ever mine. "MONTESPAN."

I hastened to tell my husband in reply that his impatience and ill-humour made me most unhappy; that as, through sickness or leave of absence, five or six of the Court ladies were away, I could not possibly absent myself just then; that I believed that I sufficiently merited his confidence to let me count upon his attachment and esteem, whether far or near. And I gave him my word of honour that I would join him after the Court moved to Fontainebleau, that is to say, in the autumn.

My answer, far from soothing or calming him, produced quite a contrary effect. I received the following letter, which greatly alarmed and agitated me:

"Your allegations are only vain pretexts, your pretexts mask your falsehoods, your falsehoods confirm all my suspicions; you are deceiving me, madam, and it is your intention to dishonour me. My cousin, who saw through you better than I did, before my wretched marriage—my cousin, whom you dislike and who is no whit afraid of you—informs me that, under the pretext of going to keep Madame de la Vallière company, you never stir from her apartments during the time allotted to her by the King, that is to say, three whole hours every evening. There you pose as sovereign arbiter; as oracle, uttering a thousand divers decisions; as

supreme purveyor of news and gossip; the scourge of all who are absent; the complacent promoter of scandal; the soul and the leader of sparkling conversation.

"*One only* of these ladies became ill, owing to an extremely favourable confinement, from which she recovered a week ago. At the outset, the King fought shy of your raillery, but in a thousand discreditable ways you set your cap at him and forced him to pay you attention. If all the letters written to me (all of them in the same strain) are not preconcerted, if your misconduct is such as I am told it is, if you have dishonoured and disgraced your husband, then, madam, expect all that your excessive imprudence deserves. At this distance of two hundred and fifty leagues I shall not trouble you with complaints and vain reproaches; I shall collect all necessary information and documentary evidence at headquarters; and, cost me what it may, I shall bring action against you, before your parents, before a court of law, in the face of public opinion, and before your protector, the King. I charge you instantly to deliver up to me my child. My unfortunate son comes of a race which never yet has had cause to blush for disgrace such as this. What would he gain, except bad example, by staying with a mother who has no virtue and no husband? Give him up to me, and at once let Dupré, my valet, have charge of him until my return. This latter will occur sooner than you think; and I shall shut you up in a convent, unless you shut me up in the Bastille.

"Your unfortunate husband,

"MONTESPAN."

The officious cousin to whom he alluded in this threatening letter had been so bold as to sue for my hand, although possessed of no property. Ever since that time he remained, as I knew, my enemy, though I did not know, nor ever suspected, that such a man would find pleasure in spying upon my actions and in effecting the irrevocable estrangement of a husband and a wife, who until then had been mutually attached to each other.

The King, whose glance, though very sweet, is very searching, said to me that evening: "Something troubles you; what is it?" He felt my pulse, and perceived my great agitation. I showed him the letter just transcribed, and His Majesty changed colour.

"It is a matter requiring caution and tact," added the Prince, after brief meditation. "At any rate we can prevent his showing you any disrespect. Give up the Marquis d'Antin to him," continued the King, after another pause. "He is useless, perhaps an inconvenience, to you; and if deprived of his child he might be driven to commit some desperate act."

"I would rather die," I exclaimed, bursting into tears.

The King affectionately took hold of both my hands, and gently said:

"Very well, then, keep him yourself, and don't give him up."

As God is my witness, M. de Montespan had already neglected me for some time before he left for the Pyrenees; and to me this sudden access of fervour seemed singularly strange. But I am not easily hoodwinked; I understood him far better, and far quicker, than he expected. The Marquis is one of those vulgar-minded men who do not look upon a woman as a friend, a companion, a frank, free associate, but as a piece of property, or of furniture, useful to his house, and which he has only procured for that purpose.

I am told that in England a man is the absolute proprietor of his wife, and that if he took her to the public market, with a cord round her neck, and exhibited her for sale, such sale is perfectly valid in the eyes of the law. Laws such as these inspire horror. Yet they should hardly surprise one among a semi-barbarous

nation, which does nothing like other peoples, and which deems itself authorised to place the censer in the hands of its Monarch, and its Monarch in the hands of the headsman.

M. de Montespan came to Paris and instituted proceedings against me before the Châtelet authorities. To the King he sent a letter full of provocations and insults. To the Pope he sent a formal complaint, accompanied by a most carefully prepared list of opinions which no lawyer was willing to sign. For three whole months he tormented the Pope, in order to induce him to annul our marriage. Of a truth, our Sovereign Pontiff could have done nothing better, but in Rome justice and religion always rank second to politics. The cardinals feared to offend a great Prince, and so they suffered me to remain the wife of my husband. When he saw that on every side his voice was lost in the desert, and that the King, being calmer and more prudent than he, did not deign to pick up the glove, his folly reached its utmost limit. He went into the deepest mourning ever seen. He draped his horses and carriages with black. He gave orders

for a funeral service to be held in his parish, which the whole town and its suburbs were invited to attend. He declared, verbally and in writing, that he no longer possessed a wife; that Madame de Montespan had died of an attack of coquetry and ambition; and he talked *of marrying again* when the year of mourning and *of widowhood* should be over.

His first outbursts of wrath were the source of much amusement to the King, who naturally was on the side of decorum and averse to hostile opinion. Pranks such as these seemed to him more a matter for mirth than fear, and, on hearing the story of the *catafalque*, he laughingly said to me: "Now that he has buried you, it is to be hoped that he will let you repose in peace." But hearing each day of fresh absurdities, His Majesty grew at last impatient. Luckily, M. de Montespan, perceiving that every house had closed its doors to him, decided to close his own altogether and travel abroad.

Not being of a vindictive disposition, I never would allow M. de Louvois to shut him up in the Bastille. On the contrary, I privately paid more

than fifty thousand crowns to defray his debts, being glad to render him some good service in exchange for all the evil that he spoke of me.

I reflected that he had been my husband, my confidant, my friend; that his only faults were bad temper, love of sport, and love of wine; that he belonged to one of the very first families of France; and that, despite all that was said, my son d'Antin certainly was nothing to the King, and that the Marquis was his father.

CHAPTER IV

MADEMOISELLE DE LA VALLIÈRE JEALOUS — THE KING WISHES EVERYBODY TO ENJOY THEMSELVES — THE FUTILITY OF FIGHTING AGAINST FATE—WHAT IS DEAD IS DEAD.

MADEMOISELLE DE LA VALLIÈRE was tall, shapely, and extremely pretty, with as sweet and even a temper as one could possibly imagine, which eminently fitted her for dreamy, contemplative love-making such as one reads of in idylls and romances. She would willingly have spent her life in contemplating the King, in loving, in adoring him without ever opening her mouth; and, to her, the sweet silence of a *tête-à-tête* seemed preferable to any conversation enlivened by wit.

The King's character was totally different. His imagination was vivid, and mere love-making however pleasant, bored him at last, if the charm of ready speech and ready wit were wanting.

I do not profess to be a prodigy. But those who know me do me the justice to admit that where I am it is very difficult for boredom to find ever so small a footing.

Mademoiselle de la Vallière, after having begged me, and begged me often, to come and help her to entertain the King, grew suddenly suspicious and uneasy. She is candour itself, and one day, bursting into tears, she said to me, in that voice peculiar to her alone: "For Heaven's sake, my good friend, do not steal away the King's heart from me!" When mademoiselle said this to me, I vow and declare in all honesty that her fears were unfounded, and that (for my part at least) I had only a just and natural desire to gain the goodwill of a great prince. My friendship for la Vallière was so sincere, so thorough, that I often used to superintend little details of her toilet and give her various little hints as to attentive conduct of the sort which cements and revives attachments. I even furnished her with news and gossip, composing for her a little *répertoire*, of which when needful she made use.

But her star had set, and she had to show

the world the touching spectacle of a love as true, as tender, and as disinterested as any that has ever been in this world, followed by a repentance and an expiation far superior to the sin, if sin it was.

Moreover, Madame de la Vallière never broke with me. She shed tears in abundance, and wounded my heart a thousand times by the sight of her grief and her distress. For her sake I was often fain to bid farewell to her fickle lover, proud monarch though he was. But by breaking with him I should not have re-established la Vallière. The Prince's violent passion had changed to mere friendship, blended with esteem. To try and re-suscitate attachments of this sort is as if one should try to open the grave and give life to the dead. God alone can work miracles such as these.

CHAPTER V

THE MARQUIS DE BRAGELONNE, OFFICER OF THE GUARDS —HIS BALEFUL LOVE—HIS JOURNEY—HIS DEATH.

THE Marquis de Bragelonne was born for Mademoiselle de la Vallière. It was this young officer, endowed with all perfections imaginable, whom Heaven had designed for her, to complete her happiness. Despite his sincere, incomparable attachment for her, she disdained him, preferring a king, who soon afterwards wearied of her.

The Marquis de Bragelonne conceived a passion for the little la Vallière as soon as he saw her at the Tuileries with Madame Henriette d'Angleterre, whose maid-of-honour at first she was. Having made proof and declaration of his tender love, Bragelonne was so bold as to ask her hand of the Princess. Madame caused her relatives to be apprised of this, and the Marquise de Saint-Rémy, her step-mother, after all necessary enquiries

had been made, replied that the fortune of this young man was as yet too slender to permit him to think of having an establishment.

Grieved at this answer, but nothing daunted, Bragelonne conferred privately with his lady-love, and told her of his hazardous project. This project was instantly to realise all property coming to him from his father, and, furnished with this capital, to go out and seek his fortune in India.

"You will wait for me, dearest one, will you not?" quoth he. "Heaven, that is witness how ardently I long to make you happy, will protect me on my journey and guard my ship. Promise me to keep off all suitors, the number of whom will increase with your beauty. This promise, for which I desire no other guarantee but your candour, shall sustain me in my exile, and make me count as nought my privations and my hardships."

Mademoiselle de la Beaume-le-Blanc allowed the Marquis to hope all that he wished from her beautiful soul, and he departed, never imagining that one could forget or set at nought so tender a love which had prompted so hazardous an enterprise.

His journey proved thoroughly successful. He brought back with him treasures from the New World, but of all his treasures the most precious had disappeared. Restored once more to family and friends, he hastened to the capital. Madame d'Orléans no longer resided at the Tuileries, which was being enlarged by the King.

Bragelonne, in his impatience, asks everywhere for la Vallière. They tell him that she has a charming house between Saint-Germain, Lucienne and Versailles. He goes thither, laden with coral and pearls from the Indies. He asks to have sight of his love. A tall Swiss repulses him, saying that, in order to speak with *Madame la Duchesse*, it was absolutely necessary to make an appointment.

At the same moment one of his friends rides past the gateway. They greet each other, and, in reply to his questioning, this friend informs him that Mademoiselle de la Vallière is a duchess, that she is a mother, that she is lapped in grandeur and luxury, and that she has as lover a king.

At this news, Bragelonne finds nothing further for him to do in this world. He grasps his

friend's hand, retires to a neighbouring wood, and there, drawing his sword, plunges it into his heart—a sad requital for love so noble!

CHAPTER VI

M. FOUQUET—HIS MISTAKE—A WOMAN'S INDISCRETION MAY CAUSE THE LOSS OF A GREAT MINISTER—THE CASTLE OF VAUX—FAIRYLAND—A FEARFUL AWAKENING —CLEMENCY OF THE KING.

On going out into society, I heard everybody talking everywhere about M. Fouquet. They praised his good-nature, his affability, his talents, his magnificence, his wit. His post as *surintendant-général*, envied by a thousand, provoked indeed a certain amount of spite; yet all such vain efforts on the part of mediocrity to slander him troubled him but little. My lord the Cardinal was his support, and so long as the main column stood firm, M. Fouquet, lavish of gifts to his protector, had really nothing to fear.

This minister also largely profited by the species of fame to be derived from men of letters. He knew their venality and their needs. His

sumptuous, well-appointed table was placed in grandiose fashion at their disposal. Moreover, he made sure of their attachment and esteem by fees and enormous pensions. The worthy la Fontaine nibbled like others at the bait, and at any rate paid his share of the reckoning by the most profuse gratitude. M. Fouquet had one great defect: he took it into his head that every woman is devoid of will-power and of resistance if only one dazzle her eyes with gold. Another prejudice of his was to believe, as an article of faith, that, if possessed of gold and jewels, the most ordinary of men can inspire affection.

Making this twofold error his starting-point as a principle that was incontestable, he was wont to look upon every beautiful woman who happened to appear on the horizon as his property acquired in advance.

At madame's, he saw Mademoiselle de la Vallière, and instantly sent her his vows of homage and his proposals.

To his extreme astonishment, this young beauty declined to understand such language. Couched in other terms, he renewed his suit,

yet apparently was no whit less obscure than on the first occasion. Such a scandal as this well-nigh put him to the blush, and he was obliged to admit that this modest maiden either affected to be, or really was, utterly extraordinary.

Perhaps Mademoiselle de la Vallière ought to have had the generosity not to divulge the proposals made to her; but she spoke about them, so everybody said, and the King took a dislike to his minister.

Whatever the cause or the real motives for Fouquet's disgrace, it was never considered unjust, and this leads me to tell the tale of his mad folly at Vaux.

The two palaces built by Cardinal Mazarin, and the castles built by Cardinal Richelieu, served as fine examples for M. Fouquet. He knew that handsome edifices embellished the country, and that Mæcenas has always been held in high renown, because Mæcenas built a good deal in his day.

He had just built, at great expense, in the neighbourhood of Melun, a castle of such superb and elegant proportions that the fame of it had

even reached foreign parts. All that Fouquet lived for was show and pomp. To have a fine edifice and not show it off was as if one only possessed a kennel.

He spoke of the Castle of Vaux in the Queen's large drawing-room, and begged Their Majesties to honour by their presence a grand fête that he was preparing for them.

To invite the Royal Family was but a trifling matter—he required spectators proportionate to the scale of decorations and on a par with the whole spectacle, so he took upon himself to invite the entire Court to Vaux.

On reaching Vaux-le-Vicomte, how great and general was our amazement! It was not the well-appointed residence of a minister, it was not a human habitation that presented itself to our view—it was a veritable fairy palace. All in this brilliant dwelling was stamped with the mark of opulence and of exquisite taste in art. Marbles, balustrades, vast staircases, columns, statues, groups, bas-reliefs, vases and pictures were scattered here and there in rich profusion, besides cascades and fountains innumerable. The

large *salon*, octagonal in shape, had a high, vaulted ceiling, and its flooring of mosaic looked like a rich carpet embellished with birds, butterflies, arabesques, fruits and flowers.

On either side of the main edifice, and somewhat in the rear, the architect had placed smaller buildings, yet all of them ornamented in the same sumptuous fashion, and these served to throw the château itself into relief. In these adjoining pavilions there were baths, a theatre, a *paume* ground, swings, a chapel, billiard-rooms and other saloons.

One noticed magnificent gilt roulette tables and sedan-chairs of the very best make. There were elegant stalls at which trinkets were distributed to the guests—note-books, pocket-mirrors, gloves, knives, scissors, purses, fans, sweetmeats, scents, pastilles, and perfumes of all kinds.

It was as if some evil fairy had prompted the imprudent minister to act in this way, who, eager and impatient for his own ruin, had thus summoned his King to witness his appalling system of plunder in its entirety, and had invited chastisement.

When the King went out on to the balcony

of his apartment to make a general survey of the gardens and the perspective, he found everything well arranged and most alluring; but a certain vista seemed to him spoiled by whitish-looking clearings that gave too barren an aspect to the general *coup d'œil.*

His host readily shared this opinion. He at once gave the requisite instructions, which that very night were executed by torchlight with the utmost secrecy by all the workmen of the locality whose services at such an hour it was possible to secure.

When next day the Monarch stepped out on to his balcony, he saw a beautiful green wood in place of the clearings with which on the previous evening he had found fault.

Service more prompt or tasteful than this it was surely impossible to have; but kings only desire to be obeyed when they command.

Fouquet, with airy presumption, expected thanks and praise. This, however, was what he had to hear: "I am shocked at such expense!"

Soon afterwards the Court moved to Nantes; the ministers followed; M. Fouquet was arrested.

His trial at the Paris Arsenal lasted several months. Proofs of his defalcations were numberless. His family and protégés made frantic yet futile efforts to save so great a culprit. The Commission sentenced him to death, and ordered the confiscation of all his property.

The King, content to have made this memorable and salutary example, commuted the death penalty, and M. Fouquet learned with gratitude that he would have to end his days in prison.

Nor did the King insist upon the confiscation of his property, which went to the culprit's widow and children; all that was retained being the enormous sums which he had embezzled.

CHAPTER VII

CLOSE OF THE QUEEN-MOTHER'S ILLNESS—THE ARCHBISHOP OF AUCH—THE PATIENT'S RESIGNATION—THE SACRAMENT—COURT CEREMONY FOR ITS RECEPTION—SAGE DISTINCTION OF MADEMOISELLE DE MONTPENSIER—HER PRUDENCE AT THE FUNERAL.

As the Queen-mother's malady grew worse, the Court left Saint-Germain to be nearer the experts and the Val-de-Grâce, where the Princess frequently practised her devotions with members of the religious sisterhood that she had founded.

Suddenly the cancer dried up, and the head physician declared that the Queen was lost.

The Archbishop of Auch said to the King: "Sire, there is not an instant to be lost; the Queen may die at any moment; she should be informed of her condition, so that she may prepare herself to receive the Sacrament."

The King was troubled, for he dearly loved his mother. "Sir," he replied, with emotion, "it

is impossible for me to sanction your request. My mother is resting calmly, and perhaps thinks that she is out of danger. We might give her her death-blow."

The prelate, a man of firm, religious character, insisted, albeit reverently, while the Prince continued to object. Then the Archbishop retorted: "It is not with nature or the world that we have here to deal. We have to save a soul. I have done my duty, and filial tenderness will at any rate bear the blame."

The King thereupon acceded to the churchman's wishes, who lost no time in acquainting the patient with her doom.

Anne of Austria was grievously shocked at so terrible an announcement, but she soon recovered her resignation and her courage; and M. d'Auch made noble use of his eloquence when exhorting her to prepare for the change that she dreaded.

A portable altar was put up in the room, and the Archbishop, assisted by other clerics, went to fetch the Holy Sacrament from the church of Saint-Germain de l'Auxerrois in the Louvre parish.

The Princes and Princesses hereupon began to

argue in the little closet as to the proper ceremony to be observed on such occasions. Madame de Motteville, lady-in-waiting to the Queen, being asked to give an opinion, replied that, for the late King, the nobles had gone out to meet the Holy Sacrament as far as the outer gate of the palace, and that it would be wise to do this on the present occasion.

Mademoiselle de Montpensier interrupted the lady-in-waiting and those who shared her opinion. "I cannot bring myself to establish such a precedent," she said, in her usual haughty tone. "It is I who have to walk first, and I shall only go half-way across the courtyard of the Louvre. It's quite far enough for the Holy Wafer-box; what's the use of walking any further for the Holy Sacrament?"

The Princes and Princesses were of her way of thinking, and the procession only advanced to the limits aforesaid.

When the time came for taking the Sacred Heart to Val-de-Grâce with the funeral procession, mademoiselle, in a long mourning cloak, said to the Archbishop, before everybody: "Pray, sir, put

the Sacred Heart in the best place, and sit you close beside it. I yield my rank up to you on the present occasion." And, as the prelate protested, she added: "I shall be very willing to ride in front on account of the malady from which she died." And, without altering her resolution, she actually took her seat in front.

CHAPTER VIII

CARDINAL MAZARIN—REGENCY OF ANNE OF AUSTRIA—HER PERSEVERANCE IN RETAINING HER MINISTER—MAZARIN GIVES HIS NIECES IN MARRIAGE—M. DE LA MEILLERAYE—THE CARDINAL'S FESTIVITIES—MADAME DE MONTESPAN'S LUCK AT A LOTTERY.

BEFORE taking holy orders, Cardinal Mazarin had served as an officer in the Spanish army, where he had even won distinction.

Coming to France in the train of a Roman cardinal, he took service with Richelieu, who, remarking in him all the qualities of a supple, insinuating, artificial nature—that is to say, the nature of a good politician—appointed him his private secretary, and entrusted him with all his secrets, as if he had singled him out as his successor.

Upon the death of Richelieu, Mazarin did not scruple to avow that the great Armand's sceptre

had been a tyrant's sceptre and of bronze. By such an admission he crept into the good graces of Louis XIII., who, himself almost moribund, had shown how pleased he was to see his chief minister go before him to the grave.

Louis XIII. being dead, his widow, Anne of Austria, in open Parliament cancelled the Monarch's testamentary depositions and constituted herself Regent with absolute authority. Mazarin was her Richelieu.

In France, where men affect to be so gallant and so courteous, how is it that, when women rule, their reign is always stormy and troublous? Anne of Austria—comely, amiable and gracious as she was—met with the same brutal discourtesy which her ~~sister~~ mother-in-law, Marie de Médicis, had been obliged to bear. But gifted with greater force of intellect than that Queen, she never yielded aught of her just rights; and it was her strong will which more than once astounded her enemies and saved the crown for the young King.

They lampooned her, hissed her, and burlesqued her publicly at the theatres, cruelly defaming her intentions and her private life.

Strong in the knowledge of her own rectitude, she faced the tempest without flinching; yet inwardly her soul was torn to pieces. The barricading of Paris, the insolence of M. le Prince, the bravado and treachery of Cardinal de Retz, burnt up the very blood in her veins, and brought on her fatal malady, which took the form of a hideous cancer.

Our nobility (who are only too glad to go and reign in Naples, Portugal or Poland) openly declared that no foreigner ought to hold the post of minister in Paris. Despite his Roman purple, Mazarin was condemned to be hanged.

The motive for this was some trifling tax which he had ordered to be collected before this had been ratified by the magistrates and registered in the usual way.

But the Queen knew how to win over the nobles. Her cardinal was recalled, and the apathy of the Parisians put an end to these dissensions, from which, one must admit, the people and the *bourgeoisie* got all the ills and the nobility all the profits.

As comptroller of the list of benefices, M. le

Cardinal allotted the wealthiest abbeys of the realm to himself.

Having made himself an absolute master of finance, like M. Fouquet, he amassed great wealth. He built a magnificent palace in Rome, and an equally brilliant one in Paris, conferring upon himself the wealthy governorships of various towns or provinces. He had a guard of honour attached to his person, and a captain of the guard in attendance, just as Richelieu had.

He married one of his nieces to the Prince of Mantua, another to the Prince de Conti, a third to the Comte de Soissons, a fourth to the Constable Colonne (an Italian prince), a fifth to the Duc de Mercœur (a blood relation of Henry IV.), and a sixth to the Duc de Bouillon. As to Hortense, the youngest, loveliest of them all—Hortense, the beauteous-eyed, his charming favourite, he appointed her his sole heiress, and having given her jewellery and innumerable other presents, he married her to the agreeable Duc de la Meilleraye, son of the Marshal of that name.

Society was much astonished when it came out that M. le Cardinal had disinherited his own

nephew,[1] a man of merit, handing over his name, his fortune and his arms to a stranger. This was an error; in taking the name and arms of Mazarin, young Meilleraye was giving up those which *he ought* to have given up, and assuming those which it behoved him to assume.

Nor did he retain the great possessions of the la Meilleraye family. Herein, certainly, he did not consult his devotion; since the secret and fatherly avowal of M. le Cardinal he had no right whatever to the estates of this family.

Beneath the waving folds of his large scarlet robe, the Cardinal showed such ease and certainty of address, that he never put one in mind of a cardinal and a bishop. To such manners, however, one was accustomed; in a leading statesman they were not unpleasant.

He often gave magnificent balls, at which he displayed all the accomplishments of his nieces and the sumptuous splendour of his furniture. At such entertainments, always followed by a grand

1 De Mancini, Duc de Nevers, a relative of the last Duc de Nivernois. He married, soon after, Madame de Montespan's niece.—EDITOR'S NOTE.

banquet, he was wont to show a liberality worthy of crowned heads. One day, after the feast, he announced that a lottery would be held in his palace.

Accordingly, all the guests repaired to his superb gallery, which had just been brilliantly decorated with paintings by Romanelli, and here, spread out upon countless tables, we saw pieces of rare porcelain, scent-bottles of foreign make, watches of every size and shape, chains of pearls or of coral, diamond buckles and rings, gold boxes adorned by portraits set in pearls or in emeralds, fans of matchless elegance; in a word, all the rarest, most costly things that luxury and fashion invent.

The Queens distributed the tickets with every appearance of honesty and good faith. But I had reason to remark, by what happened to myself, that the tickets had been *registered* beforehand. The young Queen, who felt her garter slipping off, came close to me in order to tighten it. She handed me her ticket to hold for a moment, and when she had fastened her garter I gave her back my ticket instead of her

own. When the Cardinal from his dais read out the numbers in succession, my number won a portrait of the King set in brilliants, much to the surprise of the Queen-mother and his Eminence; they could not get over it.

To me this lottery of the Rue Neuve-des-Petits-Changes[1] brought good luck, and we often talked about it afterwards with the King, regarding it as a sort of prediction or horoscope.

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1 The gallery to which the Marquise alludes is to-day called the Manuscript Gallery. It belongs to the Royal Library in the Rue de Richelieu. Mazarin's house is now the Treasury.—EDITOR'S NOTE.

CHAPTER IX

MARRIAGE OF MONSIEUR, THE KING'S BROTHER — HIS HOPE OF MOUNTING A THRONE—HIS HIGH-HEELED SHOES — HIS DEAD CHILD — SAINT-DENIS.

MONSIEUR would seem to have been created in order to set off his brother, the King, and to give him the advantage of such relief. He is small in stature and in character, being ceaselessly busied about trifles, details, nothings. To his toilet and his mirror he devotes far more time than a pretty woman; he covers himself with scents, with laces, with diamonds.

He is passionately fond of fêtes, large assemblies and spectacular displays. It was in order to figure as the hero of some such entertainment that he suddenly resolved to get married.

Mademoiselle — the Grand Mademoiselle — Mademoiselle d'Eu, Mademoiselle de Dombes, Mademoiselle de Montpensier, Mademoiselle de

Saint-Fargeau, Mademoiselle de la Roche-sur-Yon, Mademoiselle d'Orléans—had come into the world twelve or thirteen years before he had, and they could not abide each other. Despite such trifling differences, however, he proposed marriage to her. The Princess, than whom no one more determined exists, answered: "You ought to have some respect for me; I refused two crowned husbands the very day you were born."

So the Prince begged the Queen of England to give him her charming daughter, Henrietta, who, having come to France during her unfortunate father's captivity, had been educated in Paris.

The Princess possessed an admirable admixture of grace and beauty, wit being allied to great affability and good-nature; to all these natural gifts she added a capacity and intelligence such as one might desire sovereigns to possess. Her coquetry was mere amiability; of that I am convinced. Being naturally vain, the Prince, her husband, made great use at first of his Consort's royal coat-of-arms. It was displayed on his equipages and stamped all over his furniture.

"Do you know, madam," quoth he, gallantly, one day, "what made me absolutely desire to marry you? It was because you are a daughter and a sister of the Kings of England. In your country women succeed to the throne, and if Charles the Second and my cousin York were to die without children (which is very likely), you would be Queen and I should be King."

"Oh, Sire, how wrong of you to imagine such a thing!" replied his wife; "it brings tears to my eyes. I love my brothers more than I do myself. I trust that they may have issue, as they desire, and that I may not have to go back and live with those cruel English who slew my father-~~in-law~~."

The Prince sought to persuade her that a sceptre and a crown are always nice things to have. "Yes," replied Henrietta, slyly, "but one must know how to wear them."

Soon after this, he again talked of his expectations, saying every minute: "If ever I am King, I shall do so; if ever I am King, I shall order this; if ever I am King," &c., &c.

"Let us hope, my good friend," replied the Princess, "that you won't be King in England,

where your gew-gaws would make people call out after you; nor yet in France, where they would think you too little, after the King."

At this last snub, Monsieur was much mortified. The very next day he summoned his old bootmaker, Lambertin, and ordered him to put extra heels two inches high to his shoes. Madame having told this piece of childish folly to the King, he was greatly amused, and with a view to perplex his brother, he had his own shoe-heels heightened, so that, beside His Majesty, Monsieur still looked quite a little man.

The Princess gave premature birth to a child that was scarcely recognisable; it had been dead in its mother's womb for at least ten days, so the doctors averred. Monsieur le Duc d'Orléans, however, insisted upon having this species of monstrosity baptised.

My sister, de Thianges, who is raillery personified, seeing how embarrassed was the curé of Saint-Cloud by the Prince's repeated requests for baptism, gravely said to the cleric in an irresistibly comic fashion: "Do you know, sir, that your refusal is contrary to all good sense and good breeding,

and that to infants of such quality baptism is never denied ? "

When this species of miscarriage had to be buried, as there was urgent need to get rid of it, Monsieur uttered loud cries, and said that he had written to his brother so that there might be a grand funeral service at Saint-Denis.

Of so absurd a proposal as this no notice was taken, which served to amaze Monsieur for one whole month.

CHAPTER X

M. COLBERT—HIS ORIGIN—HE UNVEILS AND DISPLAYS MAZARIN'S WEALTH—THE MONARCH'S LIBERALITY—RESENTMENT OF THE CARDINAL'S HEIRS.

A FEW moments before he died, Cardinal Mazarin, through stratagem, not through repentance, besought the King to accept a deed of gift whereby he was appointed his universal legatee. Touched by so noble a resolve, the King gave back the deed to his Eminence, who shed tears of emotion.

"Sire, I owe all to you," said the dying man to the young Prince, "but I believe that I shall pay off my debt by giving Colbert, my secretary, to your Majesty. Faithful as he has been to me, so will he be to you, and while he keeps watch, you may sleep. He comes from the noble family of Coodber, of Scottish origin; and his sentiments are worthy of his ancestors."[1]

1 *Vide* "Memoirs of the Duc de Richelieu," Vol. II.

A few moments later the death-agony began, and M. Colbert begged the King to listen to him in an embrasure. There, taking a pencil, he made out a list of all the millions which the Cardinal had hidden away in various places. The Monarch bewailed his minister, his tutor, his friend, but so astounding a revelation dried his tears. He affectionately thanked M. Colbert, and from that day forward gave him his entire consideration and esteem.

M. Colbert was diligent enough to seize upon the millions hidden at Vincennes, the millions secreted in the old Louvre, at Courbevoie and the other country seats. But the millions in gold, hidden in the bastions of La Fère, fell into the hands of heirs, who, a few moments after the commencement of the Cardinal's death-agony, sent off a valet post-haste.

The Cardinal's family pretended to know nothing of this affair; but they could never bear M. Colbert nor any of his kinsfolk. The King, being of a generous nature, distributed all this wealth in the best and most liberal manner possible. M. Colbert told him to what use Mazarin meant

to put all these riches; he hoped to have prevailed upon the Conclave to elect him Pope, with the concurrence of Spain, France and the Holy Ghost.

CHAPTER XI

THE YOUNG QUEEN—HER PORTRAIT—HER WHIMS—HER LOVE FOR THE KING—HER CHAGRIN.

MARIE THÉRÈSE, the King's new consort, was the daughter of the King of Spain and Elizabeth of France, daughter of Henry IV. At the time of her marriage she had lost her mother, and it was King Philip, Anne of Austria's brother, who himself presented her to us at Saint-Jean-de-Luz, where he signed the peace-contract. The Spanish Monarch admired his nephew, the King, whose stalwart figure, comely face and polished manners were, indeed, well calculated to excite surprise.

Anne of Austria had said to him: "My brother, my one fear during your journey was lest your ailments and the hardships of travel should hinder you from getting back here again."

"Was such your thought, sister?" replied the

good man. "I would willingly have come on foot, so as to behold with my own eyes the superb cavalier that you and I are going to give to my daughter."

After the oath of peace had been sworn upon the Gospels, there was a general presentation before the two Kings. Cantocarrero, the Castilian secretary of state, presented the Spanish notabilities, while Cardinal Mazarin, in his pontifical robes, presented the French. As he announced M. de Turenne, the old King looked at him repeatedly. "There's one," quoth he, "who has given me many a sleepless night."

M. de Turenne bowed respectfully, and both Courts could perceive in his simple bearing his unaffected modesty.

On leaving Spain and the King, her father, the young Princess was moved to tears. Next day she thought nothing of it at all. She was wholly engrossed by the possession of such a fine man as the King, nor was she at any pains to hide her glee from us.

Of all her Court ladies I was the most youthful, and, perhaps, the most conspicuous. At the outset

the Queen showed a wish to take me into her confidence, but it was the lady-in-waiting who would never consent to this.

When, at that lottery of the Cardinal's, I won the King's portrait, the Queen-mother called me into her closet and desired to know how such a thing could possibly have happened. I replied that, during the garter-incident, the two tickets had got mixed. "Ah, in that case," said the Princess, "the occurrence was quite a natural one! So, keep this portrait, since it has fallen into your hands, but, for God's sake, don't try and make yourself pleasant to my son; for you're only too fascinating as it is. Look at that little la Vallière, what a mess she has got into, and what chagrin she has caused my poor Marie Thérèse!"

I replied to Her Majesty that I would rather let myself be buried alive than ever imitate la Vallière, and I said so then because that was really what I thought.

The Queen-mother softened, and gave me her hand to kiss, now addressing me as "madam," and anon as "my daughter." A few days afterwards she wished to walk in the gallery with me,

and said to me: "If God suffers me to live, I will make you lady-in-waiting; be sure of that."

Anne of Austria was a tall, fine, dark woman, with brown eyes, like those of the King. The Infanta, her niece, is a very pretty blonde, blue-eyed, but short in stature.

To her slightest words the Queen-mother gives sense and wit; her daughter-in-law's speeches and actions are of the simplest, most commonplace kind. Were it not for the King, she would pass her life in a dressing-gown, night-cap and slippers. At Court ceremonies and on gala-days, she never appears to be in a good-humour; everything seems to weigh her down, notably her diamonds.

However, she has no remarkable defect, and one may say that she is devoid of goodness, just as she is devoid of badness. When coming among us, she contrived to bring with her Molina, the daughter of her nurse, a sort of comedy confidante, who soon gave herself Court airs, and who managed to form a regular little Court of her own. Without her sanction nothing can be obtained of the Queen. My lady Molina is the great, the small, and the unique counsellor of the Prin-

cess, and the King, like the others, remains submissive to her decisions and her inspection.

French cookery, by common consent, is held to be well-nigh perfect in its excellence; yet the Infanta could never get used to our dishes. The Señora Molina, well furnished with silver kitchen utensils, has a sort of private kitchen or scullery reserved for her own use, and there it is that the manufacture takes place of clove-scented chocolate, brown soups and gravies, stews redolent with garlic, capsicums and nutmeg, and all that nauseous pastry in which the young Infanta revels.

Ever since la Vallière's lasting triumph, the Queen seems to have got it into her head that she is despised; and at table I have often heard her say: "They will help themselves to everything, and won't leave me anything."

I am not unjust, and I admit that a husband's public attachments are not exactly calculated to fill his legitimate consort with joy. But, fortunately for the Infanta, the King abounds in rectitude and good-nature. This very good-nature it is which prompts him to use all the consideration of which a noble nature is capable,

and the more his amours give the Queen just cause for anxiety, the more does he redouble his kindness and consideration towards her. Of this she is sensible. Thus, she acquiesces, and, as much through tenderness as social tact, she never reproaches or upbraids him with anything. Nor does the King scruple to admit that, to secure so good-natured a partner, it was well worth the trouble of going to fetch her from the other end of the world.

CHAPTER XII

MADAME DE LA VALLIÈRE BECOMES DUCHESS—HER FAMILY IS RESIGNED—HER CHILDREN RECOGNISED BY THE KING—MADAME COLBERT THEIR GOVERNESS —THE KING'S PASSION GROWS MORE SERIOUS—LOVE AND FRIENDSHIP.

Out of affection and respect for the Queen-mother, the King had until then sought to conceal the ardour of his attachment for Mademoiselle de la Vallière. It was after the six months of mourning that he shook off all restraint, showing that, like any private person, he felt himself master of his actions and his inclinations.

He gave the Vaujours estate to his mistress, after formally constituting it a duchy, and, owing to the two children of his duchy, Mademoiselle de la Vallière assumed the title of Duchess. What a fuss she made at this time! All that was styled disinterestedness, modesty. Not a bit of it. It was pusillanimity and a sense of servile fear. La

Vallière would have liked to have enjoyed her handsome lover in the shade and security of mystery, without exposing herself to the satire of courtiers and of the public, and, above all, to the reproaches of her family and relatives, who nearly all were very devout.

On this head, however, she soon saw that such fears were exaggerated. The Marquise de Saint-Rémy was but slightly scandalised at what was going on. She and the Marquis de Saint-Rémy, her second husband, strictly proper though they were, came to greet their daughter when proclaimed duchess. And when a few days afterwards the King declared the rank of the two children to the whole of assembled Parliament, the two families of Saint-Rémy and la Vallière offered congratulations to the Duchess, and received those of all Paris.

M. Colbert, who owed everything to the King, entrusted Madame Colbert with the education of the new Prince and Princess; they were brought up under the eyes of this statesman, who for everything found time and obligingness. The girl, lovely as love itself, took the name of Mademoiselle de

Blois, while to her little brother was given the title of Count de Vermandois.

It was just about this time that I noticed the beginning of the monarch's serious attachment for me. Till then it had been only playful badinage, good-humoured teasing, a sort of society play, in which the King was rehearsing his part as a lover. I was at length bound to admit that chaff of this sort might end in something serious, and His Majesty begged me to let him have la Vallière for some time longer.

I have already said that, while becoming her rival, I still remained her friend. Of this she had countless proofs, and when, at long intervals, I saw her again in her dismal retreat, her good-nature, unchanging as this was, caused her to receive and welcome me as one welcomes those one loves.

CHAPTER XIII

FIRST VOCATION OF MADEMOISELLE DE LA VALLIÈRE—THE KING SURPRISES HIS MISTRESS—SHE IS FORCED TO RETIRE TO A CONVENT—THE KING HASTENS TO TAKE HER BACK—SHE WAS NOT MADE FOR COURT LIFE—HER FAREWELL TO THE KING—HER SACRIFICE—THE ABBÉ DE BOSSUET.

WHAT I am now about to relate I have from her own lips, nor am I the only one to whom she made such recitals and avowals.

Her father died when she was quite young, and, when dying, foresaw that his widow, being without fortune or constancy, would ere long marry again. To little Louise he was devotedly attached. Ardently embracing her, he addressed her thus:

"In losing me, my poor little Louise, you lose all. What little there is of my inheritance ought, undoubtedly, to belong to you; but I know your mother; she will dispose of it. If my relatives do not show the interest in you which your

fatherless state should inspire, renounce this world soon, where, separated from your father, there exists for you but danger and misfortune. Two of my ancestors left their property to the nuns of Saint-Bernard at Gomer-Fontaines, as they are perfectly well aware. Go to them in all confidence; they will receive you without a dowry even; it is their duty to do so. If, disregarding my last counsel, you go astray in the world, from the eternal abodes on high I will watch over you; I will appear to you, if God empower me to do so; and, at any rate, from time to time, I will knock at the door of your heart to rouse you from your baleful slumber and draw your attention to the sweet paths of light that lead to God."

This speech of a dying father was graven upon the heart of a young girl both timid and sensitive. She never forgot it; and it needed the fierce, inexplicable passion which took possession of her soul to captivate her and carry her away so far.

Before becoming attached to the King, she opened out her heart to me with natural candour; and whenever in the country she observed the

turrets or the spire of a monastery, she sighed, and I saw her beautiful blue eyes fill with tears.

She was maid-of-honour to the Princess Henrietta of England, and I filled a like office. Our two companions, being the most quick-witted, durst not talk about their love-affairs before Louise, so convinced were we of her modesty, and almost of her piety.

In spite of that, as she was gentle, intelligent and well-bred, the Princess plainly preferred her to the other three. In temperament they suited each other to perfection.

The King frequently came to the Palais Royal, where the bright, pleasant conversation of his sister-in-law made amends for the inevitable boredom which one suffered when with the Queen.

Being brought in such close contact with the King, who, in private life, is irresistibly attractive, Mademoiselle de la Vallière conceived a violent passion for him, yet, owing to modesty or natural timidity, it was plain that she carefully sought to hide her secret. One fine night she and two young persons of her own age were seated under a large oak-tree in the grounds of Saint-Germain.

The Marquis de Béringhen, seeing them in the moonlight, said to the King, who was walking with him: "Let us turn aside, Sire, in this direction; yonder there are three solitary nymphs, who seem waiting for fairies or lovers." Then they noiselessly approached the tree that I have mentioned, and lost not a word of all the talk in which the fair ladies were engaged.

They were discussing the last ball at the château. One extolled the charms of the Marquis d'Alincour, son of Villeroi; the second mentioned another young nobleman, while the third frankly expressed herself in these terms:

"The Marquis d'Alincour and the Prince de Marcillac are most charming, no doubt, but, in all conscience, who could be interested in their merits when once the King appeared in their midst?"

"Oh, oh!" cried the two others, laughing, "it's strange to hear you talk like that; so, one has to be a king in order to merit your attention?"

"His rank as king," replied Mademoiselle de la Vallière, "is not the astonishing part about him; I should have recognised it even in the simple dress of a herdsman."

The three chatterers then rose and went back to the château. Next day, the King, wholly occupied with what he had overheard on the previous evening, sat musing on a sofa at his sister-in-law's, when all at once the voice of Mademoiselle de la Beaume-le-Blanc smote his ear and brought trouble to his heart. He saw her, noticed her melancholy look, thought her lovelier than the loveliest, and at once fell passionately in love.

They soon got to understand one another, yet for a long while merely communicated by means of notes at fêtes, or during the performance of allegorical ballets and opérettes, the airs in which sufficiently expressed the nature of such missives.

In order to put the Queen-mother off the scent and screen la Vallière, the King pretended to be in love with Mademoiselle la Mothe-Houdancour, one of the Queen's maids-of-honour. He used to talk across to her out of one of the top-storey windows, and even wished her to accept a present of diamonds. But Madame de Navailles, who took charge of the maids-of-honour, had gratings put over the top-storey windows, and la

Mothe-Houdancour was so chagrined by the Queen's icy manner towards her that she withdrew to a convent. As to the Duchess de Navailles and her husband, they got rid of their charges and retired to their estates, where great wealth and freedom were their recompense after such pompous Court slavery.

The Queen-mother was still living; unlike her niece, she was not blindfold. The adventure of Mademoiselle de la Mothe-Houdancour seemed to her just what it actually was—a subterfuge; as she surmised, it could only be la Vallière. Having discovered the name of her confessor, the Queen herself went in disguise to the Théatin Church, flung herself into the confessional where this man officiated, and promised him the sum of thirty thousand francs for their new church if he would help her to save the King.

The Théatin promised to do what the Queen thus earnestly desired, and when his fair penitent came to confess, he ordered her at once to break off her connection with the Court as with the world, and to shut herself up in a convent.

Mademoiselle de la Vallière shed tears, and

sought to make certain remarks, but the confessor, a man of inflexible character, threatened her with eternal damnation, and he was obeyed.

Beside herself with grief, la Vallière left by another door, so as to avoid her servants and her coach. She recollected seeing a little convent of *hospitalières* at Saint-Cloud; she went thither on foot, and was cordially welcomed by these dames.

Next day it was noised abroad in the château that she had been carried off by order of the Queen-mother. During vespers the King seemed greatly agitated, and no sooner had the preacher ascended the pulpit than he rose and disappeared.

The confusion of the two Queens was manifest; no one paid any heed to the preacher; he scarcely knew where he was.

Meanwhile, the conquering King had started upon his quest. Followed by a page and a carriage and pair, he first went to Chaillot, and then to Saint-Cloud, where he rang at the entrance of the modest abode which harboured his friend. The nun at the turnstile answered him harshly, and denied him an audience. It is true, he only told her he was a cousin or a relative.

Seeing that this nun was devoid of sense and of humanity, he bethought himself of endeavouring to persuade the gardener, who lived close to the monastery. He slipped several gold pieces into his hand, and most politely requested him to go and tell the Lady Superior that he had come thither on behalf of the King.

The Lady Superior came down into the parlour, and recognised the King from a superb miniature, besought him *of his grandeur* to interest himself in this young lady of quality, devoid of means and fatherless, and consented, moreover, to give her up to him, *since, as King, he so commanded.*

Louise de la Beaume-le-Blanc obeyed the King, or, in other words, the dictates of her own heart, imprudently embarking upon a career of passion for which a temperament wholly different from hers was needed. It is not simple-minded maidens that one wants at Court to share the confidence of princes. No doubt natures of that sort, simple, disinterested souls, are pleasant and agreeable to them, as therein they find contentment such as they greedily prize; but for these unsullied, romantic natures, disillusion, trickery alone is in store. And if Mademoiselle de la

Beaume-le-Blanc had listened to me, she might have turned matters to far better account, nor, after yielding up her youth to a monarch, would she have been obliged to end her days *in a prison.*

After various ineffectual attempts, after three, or even four, years of hesitation, she at last made up her mind and resolved to bid farewell to the world and the things of the world.

The King no longer visited her as his mistress, but trusted and esteemed her as a friend and as the mother of his two pretty children.

One day, in the month of April, 1674, His Majesty, while in the gardens, received the following letter, which one of la Vallière's pages proffered him on bended knee:—

"SIRE, — To-day I am leaving for ever this palace, whither the cruellest of fatalities summoned my youth and inexperience. Had I not met you, my heart would but have loved seclusion, a laborious life and my kinsfolk. An imperious inclination which I could not conquer, gave me to you, and, simple, docile as I was by nature, I believed that my passion would always prove to me delicious and that your love would never die. In this world nothing endures. My fond attachment has ceased to have any charm for you, and my heart is filled with dismay. This

trial has come from God; of this my reason and my faith are convinced. God has felt compassion for my unspeakable grief. That which for long past I have suffered is greater than human force can bear; He is going to receive me into His home of mercy. He promises me both healing and peace.

"In this theatre of pomp and perfidy I have only stayed until such a moment as my daughter and her youthful brother might more easily do without me. You will cherish them both; of that I have no doubt. Guide them, I beseech you, for the sake of your own glory and their well-being. May your watchful care sustain them, while their mother, humbled and prostrate in a cloister, shall commend them to Him who pardons all.

"After my departure, show some kindness to those who were my servants and faithful domestics, and deign to take back the estates and residences which served to support me in my frivolous grandeur and maintain the celebrity that I deplore.

"Adieu, Sire; think no more about me, lest such a feeling, to which my imagination might but all too readily lend itself, only beget links of sympathy in my heart which conscience and repentance would fain destroy.

"If God call me to Himself, young though yet I am, He will have granted my prayers; if He ordain me to live for a while longer in this desert of penitence, it will never compensate for the duration of my error, nor for the scandal of which I have been the cause.

"Your subject from this time forth,

"LOUISE DE LA VALLIÈRE."

The King had not been expecting so desperate a resolve as this, nor did he feel inclined to hinder her from making it. He left the Portuguese ambassador, who witnessed his agitation, and hastened to Madame de la Vallière's, who had left her apartments in the castle at daybreak. He shed tears, being kind of heart and convinced that a body so graceful and so delicate would never be able to resist the rigours and hardships of so terrible a life.

The Carmelite nuns of the Rue Saint-Jacques loudly proclaimed this conversion, and in their vanity gladly received into their midst so modest and distinguished a victim, driven thither through sheer despair.

The ceremony which these dames call "taking the dress" attracted the entire Court to their church. The Queen herself desired to be present at so harrowing a spectacle, and by a curious contradiction, of which her capricious nature is capable, she shed floods of tears. La Vallière seemed gentler, lovelier, more modest and more seductive than ever. In the midst of the grief and tears which her courageous sacrifice pro-

voked, she never uttered a single sigh, nor did she change colour once. Hers was a nature made for extremes; like Cæsar, she said to herself: "Either Rome or nothing."

The Abbé de Bossuet, who had been charged to preach the sermon of investiture, showed a good deal of wit by exhibiting none at all. The King must have felt indebted to him for such reserve. Into his discourse he had put mere vague commonplaces, which neither touch nor wound anyone; honeyed anathemas such as these may even pass for compliments.

This prelate has won for himself a great name and great wealth by words. A proof of his cleverness exists in his having lived in grandeur, opulence and worldly happiness, while making people believe that he condemned such things.

CHAPTER XIV

STORY OF THE QUEEN-MOTHER'S MARRIAGE WITH CARDINAL MAZARIN PUBLISHED IN HOLLAND.

DESPITE the endeavours made by the ministers concerning the pamphlet or volume about which I am going to speak, neither they nor the King succeeded in quashing a sinister rumour and an opinion which had taken deep root among the people. Ever since this calumny it believes—and will always believe—in the *twin-brother* of Louis XIV., *suppressed*, one knows not why, *by his mother*, just as one believes in fairy-tales and novels. This false rumour, invented by far-seeing folk, is that which has most affected the King. I will recount the manner in which it reached him.

Since the disorder and insolence of the Fronde this Prince did not like to reside in the capital; he soon invented pretexts for getting away from

it. The château of the Tuileries, built by Catherine de Medicis at some distance from the Louvre, was, really speaking, only a little country-house and Trianon. The King conceived the plan of uniting this structure with his palace at the Louvre, extending it on the Saint-Roch side and also on the side of the river, and this being settled the Louvre gallery would be carried on as far as the southern angle of the new building, so as to form one whole edifice, as it now appears.

While these alterations were in progress, the Court quitted the Louvre and the capital, and took up its permanent residence at Saint-Germain.

Though ceasing to make a royal residence and home of Paris, His Majesty did not omit to pay occasional visits to the centre of the capital. He came *incognito*, sometimes on horseback, sometimes in a coach, and usually went about the streets on foot. On these occasions he was dressed carelessly, like any ordinary young man, and the better to ensure a complete disguise, he kept continually changing either the colour of his moustache or the colour and cut of his clothes. One evening, on leaving the opera, just as he was about to

open his carriage door, a man approached him with a great air of mystery, and, tendering a pamphlet, begged him to buy it. To get rid of the importunate fellow, His Majesty purchased the book, and never glanced at its contents until the following day.

Imagine his surprise and indignation! The following was the title of his purchase:

"Secret and Circumstantial Account of the Marriage of Anne of Austria, Queen of France, with the Abbé Jules Siméon Mazarin, Cardinal of the Holy Roman Church. A new edition, carefully revised. Amsterdam."

Grave and phlegmatic by nature, the King was always master of his feelings—a sign, this, of the noble-minded. He shut himself up in his apartment so as to be quite alone, and hastily perused the libellous pamphlet.

According to the author of it, King Louis XIII. being weak and languid, and sapped moreover by secret poison, had not been able to beget any heirs. The Queen, who secretly was Mazarin's mistress, had had twins by the abbé, the prettier of the two being only declared legitimate. The

other twin had been entrusted to obscure teachers, who, when it was time, would give him up.

The Princess, so the writer added, stung by qualms of conscience, had insisted upon having her guilty intimacy purified by the sacrament of marriage, to which the prime minister agreed. Then, mentioning the names of such and such persons as witnesses, the book stated that "this marriage was solemnised on a night in February, 1643, by Cardinal de Sainte-Suzanne, a brother and servile creature of Mazarin's."

"This explains," added the vile print, "this explains the zeal, perseverance and foolish ardour of the Queen Regent in defending her Italian against the just opposition of the nobles, against the formal charges of the magistrates, against the clamorous outcry, not only of Parisians, but of all France. This explains the indifference, or rather the firm resolve, on Mazarin's part, never to take orders, but to remain simply *tonsuré* or *minoré*, he who controls at least forty abbeys, as well as a bishopric."

"Look at the young Monarch," it ran further on, "and consider how closely he resembles his

Eminence—the same haughty glance; the same uncontrolled passion for pompous buildings, luxurious dress, and equipages; the same deference and devotion to the Queen-mother; the same independent customs, precepts, and laws; the same aversion for the Parisians; the same resentment against the honest folk of the Fronde."

This final phrase easily disclosed its origin; nor upon this point had His Majesty the slightest shadow of a doubt.

The same evening he sent full instructions to the lieutenant-general of police, and two days afterwards the nocturnal vendor of pamphlets found himself caught in a trap.

The King wished him to be brought to Saint-Germain, so that he might identify him personally; and, as he pretended to be half-witted or an idiot, he was thrown half naked into a dungeon. His allowance of dry bread diminished day by day, at which he complained, and it was decided to make him undergo this grim ordeal.

Under the pressure of hunger and thirst, the prisoner at length made a confession, and mentioned a bookseller of the Quartier Latin, who,

under the Fronde, had made his shop a meeting-place for rebels.

The bookseller, having been put in the Bastille, and upon the same diet as his salesman, stated the name of the Dutch printer who had published the pamphlet. They sought to extract more from him, and reduced his diet with such severity that he disclosed the entire secret.

This bookseller, used to a good square meal at home, found it impossible to tolerate the Bastille fare much longer. Bound hand and foot, at his final cross-examination he confessed that the work had emanated from the Cardinal de Retz or certain of his party.

He was condemned to three years' imprisonment, and was obliged to sell his shop and retire to the provinces.

I once heard M. de Louvois tell this tale, and use it as a means of silencing those who regretted the absence of the exiled Cardinal-archbishop.

As to the libellous pamphlet itself, the clumsy nature of it was only too plain, for the King is no more like Mazarin than he is like the

King of Ethiopia. On the contrary, one can easily distinguish in the general effect of his features a very close resemblance to King Louis XIII.

The libellous pamphlet stated that, on the occasion of the Infanta's first confinement, twins were born, and that the prettier of the two had been adopted—another blunder, this, of the grossest kind. A book of this sort could only deceive the working class and the Parisian lower orders, for folk about the Court, and even the *bourgeoisie*, know that it is impossible for a queen to be brought to bed *in secret*. Unfortunately for her, she has to comply with the most embarrassing rules of etiquette. She has to bear her final birth-pangs under an open canopy, surrounded at no great distance by all the Princes of the blood; they are summoned thither, and they have this right so as to prevent all frauds, subterfuges or impositions.

When the King found the seditious book in question, the Queen, his mother, was ill and in pain; every possible precaution was taken to prevent her from hearing the news, and the lieutenant-general of police, having informed the King that

two-thirds of the edition had been seized close to the Archbishop's palace, orders were given to burn all these horrible books by night, in the presence of the Marquis de Béringhen, appointed commissioner on this occasion.

CHAPTER XV

MONSIEUR LE DUC D'ORLÉANS WISHES TO BE GOVERNOR OF A PROVINCE—THE KING'S REPLY—HE REQUIRES A FAUTEUIL FOR HIS WIFE—ANOTHER EXCELLENT ANSWER OF THE KING'S.

In marrying Monsieur, the King only consulted his well-known generosity, and the richly-equipped household which he granted to this Prince should assuredly have made him satisfied and content. The Chevalier de Lorraine and the Chevalier de Rémecourt, two pleasant and baneful vampires whom Monsieur could refuse nothing, put it into his head that he should make himself feared, so as to lead His Majesty on to greater concessions, which they were perfectly able to turn to their own enjoyment and profit.

Monsieur began by asking for the governorship of a province; in reply he was told that this could not be, seeing that such appointments were never given to French princes, brothers of the King.

Monsieur le Duc d'Orléans hastened to point out that Gaston, son of Henry IV., had had such a post, and that the Duc de Verneuil, natural son of the same Henry, had one at the present time.

"That is true," replied the King, "but from my youth upward you have always heard me condemn such innovations, and you cannot expect me to do the very thing that I have blamed others for doing. If ever you were minded, brother, to rebel against my authority, your first care would, undoubtedly, be to withdraw to your province, where, like Gaston, your uncle, you would have to raise troops and money. Pray do not weary me with indiscretions of this sort, and tell those people who influence you to give you better advice for the future."

Somewhat abashed, the Duc d'Orléans affirmed that what he had said and done was entirely of his own accord.

"Did you speak of your own accord," said the King, "when insisting upon being admitted to the privy council? Such a thing can no longer be allowed. You inconsiderately expressed two different opinions, and since you cannot control

your tongue, which is most undoubtedly your own, I have no power over it — I, to whom it does not want to belong."

Then Monsieur le Duc d'Orléans added that these two refusals would seem less harsh, less painful to him, if the King would grant a seat in his own apartments, and in those of the Queen, to the Princess, his wife, who was a King's daughter.

"No, that cannot be," replied His Majesty, "and pray do not insist upon it. It is not I who have established the present customs; they existed long before you or me. It is in your interest, brother, that the majesty of the throne should not be weakened or altered, and if, from Duc d'Orléans, you one day become King of France, I know you well enough to believe that you would never be lax in this matter. Before God, you and I are exactly the same as other creatures that live and breathe; before men we are seemingly extraordinary beings, greater, more refined, more perfect. The day that people, abandoning this respect and veneration which is the support and mainstay of monarchies—the day that they regard us as their equals, all the pres-

tige of our position will be destroyed. Bereft of beings superior to the mass, who act as their leaders and supports, the laws will only be as so many black lines on white paper, and your armless chair and my *fauteuil* will be two pieces of furniture of the selfsame importance. Personally, I should like to gratify you in every respect, for the same blood flows in our veins, and we have loved each other from the cradle upwards. Ask of me things that are practicable, and you shall see that I will forestall your wishes. Personally, I daresay I care less about honorary distinctions than you do, and in Cabinet matters I am always considered to be simpler and more easy to deal with than such and such a one. One word more, and I have done. I will nominate you to the governorship of any province you choose, if you will now consent in writing to let proceedings be taken against you, just as against any ordinary gentleman, in case there should be sedition in your province or any kind of disorder during your administration."

Hereupon young Philippe began to smile, and he begged the King to embrace him.

CHAPTER XVI

ARMS AND LIVERY OF MADAME DE MONTESPAN—DUCHESS OR PRINCESS — FRESH SCANDAL CAUSED BY THE MARQUIS — THE RUE SAINT-HONORÉ AFFAIR — M. DE NONANCOUR—SEPARATION OF BODY AND ESTATE.

WHEN leaving, despite himself, for the provinces, M. de Montespan wrote me a letter full of bitter insults, in which he ordered me to give up his coat-of-arms, his livery and even his name.

This letter I showed to the King. For a while he was lost in thought, as usual on such occasions, and then he said to me:

"There's nothing extraordinary about the fellow's livery. Put your servants into pale orange with silver lace. Assume your old crest of Mortemart, and as regards name, I will buy you an estate with a pretty title."

"But I don't like pale orange," I instantly replied; "if I may, I should like to choose dark blue and gold lace, and as regards crest, I cannot

adopt my father's crest, except in lozenge form, which could not seriously be done. As it is your gracious intention to give me the name of an estate, give me (for to you everything is easy) a duchy like la Vallière, or, better still, a principality."

The King smiled, and answered: "It shall be done, madam, as you wish."

The very next day I went into Paris to acquaint my lawyer with my intentions. Several magnificent estates were just then in the market, but only marquisates, counties or baronies! Nothing illustrious, nothing remarkable! Duhamel assured me that the estate of Chabrillant, belonging to a spendthrift, was up for sale.

"That," said he, "is a sonorous name, the brilliant renown of which would only be enhanced by the title of princess."

Duhamel promised to see all his colleagues in this matter, and to find me what I wanted without delay.

I quitted Paris without having met or recognised anybody, when, about twenty paces at the most beyond the Porte Saint-Honoré, certain

sergeants or officials of some sort roughly stopped my carriage and seized my horses' bridle "in the King's name."

"In the King's name?" I cried, showing myself at the coach-door. "Insolent fellows! How dare you thus take the King's name in vain?" At the same time I told my coachman to whip up his horses with the reins and to drive over these vagabonds. At a word from me the three footmen jumped down and did their duty by dealing out lusty thwacks to the sergeants. A crowd collected, and townsfolk and passers-by joined in the fray.

A tall, fine-looking man, wrapped in a dressing-gown, surveyed the tumult like a philosopher from his balcony overhead. I bowed graciously to him and besought him to come down. He came, and in sonorous accents exclaimed:

"Ho, there! serving-men of my lady, stop fighting, will you? And pray, sergeants, what is your business?"

"It is a disgrace," cried they all, as with one breath. "Madame lets her scoundrelly footmen murder us, despite the name of His Majesty, which we were careful to utter at the outset of things.

Madame is a person (as everybody in France now knows) who is in open revolt against her husband; she has deserted him in order to cohabit publicly with someone else. Her husband claims his coach, with his own crest and armorial bearings thereon, and we are here for the purpose of carrying out the order of one of the judges of the High Court."

"If that be so," replied the man in the dressing-gown, "I have no objection to offer, and though madame is loveliness itself, she must suffer me to pity her, and I have the honour of saluting her."

So saying, he made me a bow, and left me, without help of any sort, in the midst of this crazy rabble.

I was inconsolable. My coachman, the best fellow in the world, called out to him from the top of his box: "Sir, pray procure help for my mistress, for Madame la Marquise de Montespan."

Hardly had he uttered these words than the gentleman came back again, while, among the lookers-on, some hissing was heard. He raised both hands with an air of authority, and, speaking with quite incredible vehemence and fire, he successfully harangued the crowd.

"Madame does not refuse to comply with the requirements of justice," he added, firmly; "but madame, a member of the Queen's household, is returning to Versailles, and cannot go thither on foot, or in some tumbledown vehicle. So I must beg these constables or sergeants (no matter which) to defer their arrest until to-morrow, and to accept me as surety. The French people is the friend of fair ladies; and true Parisians are incapable of harming or of persecuting aught that is gracious and beautiful."

All those present, who at first had hissed, replied to this speech by cries of "Bravo!" One of my men, who had been wounded in the scuffle, had his hand all bloody. A young woman brought some lavender-water, and bound up the wound with her white handkerchief, amid loud applause from the crowd, while I bowed my acknowledgments and thanks.

The King listened with interest to the account of the adventure that I have just described, and wished to know the name of the worthy man who had acted as my support and protector. His name was de Tarcy-Ronancour. The King granted him

a pension of six thousand francs, and gave the Abbey of Bauvoir to his daughter.

As for me, I kept insisting with might and main for a *separation of body and estate*, which alone could put an end to all my anxiety. When a decree for such separation was pronounced at the Châtelet, and registered according to the rules, I set about arranging an appanage which, from the very first day, had seemed to me absolutely necessary for my position.

As ill-luck would have it, the judges left me the name of Montespan, which to my husband was so irksome, and to myself also; and the King, despite repeated promises, never relieved me of a name that it was mighty difficult to bear.

CHAPTER XVII

MONSIEUR'S JEALOUSY — DIPLOMACY — DISCRETION — THE CHEVALIER DE LORRAINE'S REVENGE — THE KING'S SUSPICIONS — HIS INDIGNATION — PUBLIC VERSION OF THE MATTER—THE FUNERAL SERMON.

AFTER six months of wedlock, Henrietta of England had become so beautiful that the King drew everyone's attention to this change, as if he were not unmindful of the fact that he had given this charming person to his brother instead of reserving her for himself by marrying her.

Between cousins-german attentions are permissible. The Court, however, was not slow to notice the attentions paid by the King to this young English Princess, and Monsieur, wholly indifferent though he was as regarded his wife, deemed it a point of honour to appear offended thereat. Ever a slave to the laws of good-breeding, the King showed much self-sacrifice in curbing this violent infatuation of his. (I was Madame's maid-of-honour at the time.) As he

contemplated a Dutch expedition, in which the help of England would have counted for much, he resolved to send a negotiator to King Charles. The young Princess was her brother's pet; it was upon her that the King's choice fell.

She crossed the Channel under the pretext of paying a flying visit to her native country and her brother, but, in reality, it was to treat of matters of the utmost importance.

Upon her return, Monsieur, the most curious and inquisitive of mortals, importuned her in a thousand ways, seeking to discover her secret; but she was a person both faithful and discreet. Of her interview and journey he only got such news as was already published on the housetops. At such reticence he took umbrage; he grumbled, sulked and would not speak to his wife.

The Chevalier de Lorraine, who in that illustrious and luckless household was omnipotent, insulted the Princess in the most outrageous manner. Finding such daily slights and affronts unbearable, Madame complained to the Kings of France and England, who both exiled the Chevalier.

Monsieur de Lorraine d'Armagnac, before leaving, gave instructions to Morel, one of Monsieur's kitchen officials, to poison the Princess,* and this monster promptly executed the order by rubbing poison on her silver goblet.

I no longer belonged to Madame's household; my marriage had caused a change in my duties; but ever feeling deep attachment for this adorable Princess, I hastened to Saint-Cloud directly news reached me of her illness. To my horror, I saw the sudden change which had come over her countenance; her horrible agony drew tears from the most callous, and approaching her I kissed her hand, in spite of her confessor, who sought to constrain her to be silent. She then repeatedly told me that she was dying from the effects of poison.

This she also told the King, whom she perceived shed tears of consternation and distress.

That evening, at Versailles, the King said to me: "If this crime is my brother's handiwork, his head shall fall on the scaffold."

When the body was opened, proof of poison was obtained, and poison of the most corrosive

* stomach etc.

sort, for the stomach was eaten into in three places, and there was general inflammation.

The King summoned his brother, in order to force him to explain so heinous a crime. On perceiving his mien, Monsieur became pale and confused. Rushing upon him sword in hand, the King was for demolishing him on the spot. The captain of the guard hastened thither, and Monsieur swore by the Holy Ghost that he was guiltless of the death of *his dear wife.*

Leaving him a prey to remorse, if guilty he were, the King commanded him to withdraw, and then shut himself up in his closet to prepare a consolatory message to the English Court. According to the written statement, which was also published in the newspapers, Madame had been carried off by an attack of *bilious colic.* Five or six bribed physicians certified to that effect, and a lying set of depositions, made for mere form's sake, bore out their statements in due course.

The Abbé de Bossuet, charged to preach the funeral sermon, was apparently desirous of being as obliging as the doctors. His homily led off with such fulsome praise of Monsieur, that, from

that day forward, he lost all his credit, and sensible people hereafter only looked upon him as a vile sycophant, a mere dealer in flattery and fairy-tales.

CHAPTER XVIII

MADAME SCARRON—HER PETITION—THE KING'S AVERSION TO HER—SHE IS PRESENTED TO MADAME DE MONTESPAN—THE QUEEN OF PORTUGAL THINKS OF ENGAGING HER—MADAME DE MONTESPAN KEEPS HER BACK—THE PENSION CONTINUED—THE KING'S GRACIOUSNESS—RAGE OF MADEMOISELLE D'AUMALE.

As all the pensions granted by the Queen-mother had ceased at her demise, the pensioners began to solicit the ministers anew, and all the petitions, as is customary, were sent direct to the King.

One day His Majesty said to me: "Have you ever met in society a young widow, said to be very pretty, but, at the same time, extremely affected? It is to Madame Scarron that I allude, who, both before and after widowhood, has resided at the Marais."

I replied that Madame Scarron was an extremely pleasant person, and not at all affected.

I had met her at the Richelieu's or the Albret's, where her charm of manner and agreeable wit had made her in universal request. I added a few words of recommendation concerning her petition, which, unfortunately, had just been torn up, and the King curtly rejoined: "You surprise me, madam; the portrait I had given to me of her was a totally different one."

That same evening, when the young Marquis d'Alincour spoke to me about this petition *which had never obtained any answer*, I requested him to go and see Madame Scarron as soon as possible, and tell her that, in her own interest, I should be pleased to receive her.

She lost no time in paying me a visit. Her black attire served only to heighten the astounding whiteness of her complexion. Effusively thanking me for interesting myself in her most painful case, she added:

"There is, apparently, some obstacle against me. I have presented two petitions and two memoranda; being unsupported, both have been left unanswered, and I have now just made the following resolve, madam, of which you will not

disapprove. M. de Scarron, apparently well off, only had a life interest in his property. Upon his death, his debts proved in excess of his capital, and I, deeming it my duty to respect his intentions and his memory, paid off everybody, and left myself nothing. To-day, Madame la Princesse de Nemours wishes me to accompany her to Lisbon as her secretary, or rather as her friend. Being about to acquire supreme power as a Sovereign, she intends, by some grand marriage, to keep me there, and then appoint me her lady-in-waiting."

"And you submit without a murmur to such appalling exile?" I said to Madame Scarron. "Is such a pretty, charming person as yourself fitted for a Court of that kind, and for such an odd sort of climate?"

"Madam, I have sought to shut my eyes to many things, being solely conscious of the horribly forlorn condition in which I find myself in my native country."

"Have you reckoned the distance? Did the Princess confess that she was going to carry you off to the other end of the world? For her city

of Lisbon, surrounded by precipices, is more than three hundred leagues from Paris."

"At the age of three I voyaged to America, returning hither when I was eleven."

"I am vexed with Mademoiselle d'Aumale[1] for wanting to rob us of so charming a treasure. But has she any right to act in this way? Do you think her capable of contributing to your pleasure or your happiness? This young Queen of Portugal, under the guise of good-humour, hides a violent and irascible temperament. I believe her to be thoroughly selfish; suppose that she neglects and despises you, after having profited by your company to while away the tedium of her journey. Take my word for it, madam, you had better stay here with us, for there is no real society but in France, no wit but in our great world, no real happiness but in Paris. Draw up another petition as quickly as possible, and send

1 Mademoiselle d'Aumale, daughter of the Duc de Nemours, of the House of Savoy. She was a blonde, pleasant-mannered enough, but short of stature. Her head was too big for her body; and this head of hers was full of conspiracies and *coups d'état*. She dethroned her husband in order to marry his brother.—EDITOR'S NOTE.

it to me. I will present it myself, and to tell you this, is tantamount to a promise that your plea shall succeed."

Mademoiselle d'Aubigné, all flushed with emotion, assured me of her gratitude with the ingenious eloquence peculiar to herself. We embraced as two friends of the Albret set should do, and, three days later, the King received a new petition, not signed with the name of *Scarron*, but with that of *d'Aubigné*.

The pension of two thousand francs, granted three years before her death by the Queen-mother, was renewed as heretofore. Madame Scarron had the honour of making her curtsey to the King, who thought her handsome, but grave in demeanour, and, in a loud, clear voice, he said to her: "Madam, I kept you waiting; I was jealous of your friends."

The Queen of Portugal knew that I had deprived her of her secretary, fellow-gossip, reader, Spanish teacher, stewardess, confidante, and lady-in-waiting. She wrote to me complaining about this, and, on taking leave of the King to go and reign in Portugal, she said, with a rather forced air of raillery:

"I shall hate you as long as I live, and if ever you do me the honour of paying me a visit some day at Lisbon, I'll have you burned for your pains."

Then she wanted to embrace me, as if we were equals, but this I deprecated as much from aversion as from respect.

CHAPTER XIX

LA FONTAINE — BOILEAU — MOLIÈRE — CORNEILLE — LOUIS XIV.'S OPINION OF EACH OF THEM.

THE King's studies with his preceptor, Péréfixe, had only been of a superficial sort, as, in accordance with the express order of the Queen-mother, this prelate had been mainly concerned about the health of his pupil, the Queen being, above all, desirous that he should have a good constitution. "The rest comes easily enough, if a prince have but nobility of soul and a sense of duty," as the Queen often used to say. Her words came true.

I came across several Spanish and Italian books in the library of the little apartments. The "Pastor Fido," "Aminta," and the "Gerusalemme" seemed to me, at first, to be the favourite works. Then came Voiture's letters, the writings of Malherbe and de Balzac, the Fables of la Fontaine,

the Satires of Boileau, and the delightful comedies of Molière. Corneille's tragedies had been read, but not often.

Until I came to Court, I had always looked upon Corneille as the greatest tragic dramatist in the world, and as the foremost of our poets and men of letters. The King saved me from this error. Book in hand, he pointed out to me numberless faults of style, incoherent and fantastic imagery, sentiment alike exaggerated and a thousand leagues removed from nature; he considered, and still considers, Pierre Corneille to be a blind enthusiast of the ancients, whom we deem great since we do not know them. In his eyes, this *declamatory* poet was a republican more by virtue of his head than his heart or his intention, one of those men more capricious than morose, who cannot reconcile themselves to what exists, and who prefer to fall back upon bygone generations, not knowing how to live, like friendly folk, among their contemporaries.

He liked la Fontaine better, by reason of his extreme naturalness, but his unbecoming conduct at the time of the Fouquet trial proved painful to

His Majesty, who considered the following verses passing strange:

"... Trust not in Kings:
Their favour is but slippery; worse than that,
It costs one dear, and errors such as these
Full oft bring shame and scandal in their wake."

"Long live Molière!" added His Majesty; "there you have talent without artifice, poetry without rhapsody, satire without bitterness, pleasantry that is always apt, great knowledge of the human heart, and perpetual raillery that yet is not devoid of delicacy and compassion. Molière is a most charming man in every respect; I gave him a few hints for his 'Tartuffe,' and such is his gratitude that he wants to make out that, without me, he would never have written that masterpiece."

"You helped him, Sire, to produce it, and, above all things, to carry out his main idea, and Molière is right in thinking that, without a mind free from error, such as is yours, his masterpiece would never have been created."

"It struck me," continued the King, "that some such thing was indispensable as a counterbalance in the vast machinery of my government,

and I shall ever be the friend and supporter, not of Tartuffes, but of the 'Tartuffe,' as long as I live."

"And Boileau, Sire?" I continued; "what place among your favourites does he fill?"

"I like Boileau," replied the Prince, "as a necessary scourge, which one can pit against the bad taste of second-rate authors. His satires, of *too personal* a nature, and consequently iniquitous, do not please me. He knows it, and, despite himself, he will amend this. He is at work upon an 'Ars Poetica,' after the manner of Horace; the little that he has read to me of this poem leads one to expect that it will be an important work. The French language will continue to perfect itself by the help of literature like this, and Boileau, cruel though he be, is going to confer a great benefit upon all those who have to do with letters."

CHAPTER XX

BIRTH OF THE COMTE DE VEXIN—MADAME SCARRON AS GOVERNESS—THE KING'S CONTINUED DISLIKE OF HER—BIRTH OF THE DUC DU MAINE—MARRIAGE OF THE NUN.

THE King became ever more attached to me personally, as also to the peculiarities of my temperament. He had witnessed with satisfaction the birth of Madame de la Vallière's two children, and I thought that he would have the same affection for mine. But I was wrong. It was with feelings of trepidation and alarm that he contemplated my approaching confinement. Had I given birth to a daughter, I am perfectly certain that, in his eyes, I should have been done for.

I gave birth to the first Comte de Vexin, and, grasping my hand affectionately, the King said to me: "Be of good courage, madam; present princes to the Crown, and let those be scandalised who

will!" A few moments later he came back, and gave me a million for my expenses.

It was, however, mutually arranged that the new-born infant should be recognised later on, and that, for the time being, I was to have him brought up in secrecy and mystery.

When dissuading Madame Scarron from undertaking a journey to Lisbon, I had my own private ends in view. I considered her peculiarly fitted to superintend the education of the King's children, and to maintain with success the air of mysterious reserve which for a while was indispensable to me. I deputed my brother, M. de Vivonne, to acquaint her with my proposals—proposals which came from the King as well, nor did I doubt for one moment as regarded her consent and complacency, being, as she was, alone in Paris.

"Madam," said M. de Vivonne to her, "the Marquise is overjoyed at being able to offer you an important position of trust, which will change your life once for all."

"The gentle, quiet life which, thanks to the kindness of the King, I now lead, is all that my ambition can desire," replied the widow, con-

cealing her trouble from my brother; "but since the King wishes and commands it, I will renounce the liberty so dear to me, and will not hesitate to obey."

Accordingly she came. The King had a few moments' parley with her, in order to explain to her all his intentions relative to the new life upon which she was about to enter, and M. Bontems[1] furnished her with the necessary funds for establishing her household in suitable style.

A month afterwards, I went *incognito* to her lonely residence, situate amid vast kitchen-gardens between Vaugirard and the Luxembourg. The house was clean, commodious, thoroughly well appointed, and, not being overlooked by neighbours, the secret could but be safely kept. Madame Scarron's domestics included two nurses, a waiting-maid, a physician, a courier, two footmen, a coachman, a postillion, and two cooks.

Being provided with an excellent coach, she came to Saint-Germain every week, to bring me my son, or else news of his welfare.

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1 First Groom of the Chamber and Keeper of the Privy Purse.—EDITOR'S NOTE.

Her habitually sad expression somewhat pained the King. As I soon noticed their mutual embarrassment, I used to let Madame Scarron stay in an inner room all the time that His Majesty remained with me.

In the following year, I gave birth to the Duc du Maine. Mademoiselle d'Aubigné, who was waiting in the drawing-room, wrapped the child up carefully, and took it away from Paris with ali speed.

On her way she met with an adventure, comic in itself, and which mortified her much. When told of it, I laughed not a little; and, in spite of all my excuses and expressions of regret, she always felt somewhat sore about this; in fact, she never quite got over it.

Between Marly and Ruel, two mounted police officers, in pursuit of a nun who had escaped from a convent, bethought themselves of looking inside Madame Scarron's carriage. Such inquisitiveness surprised her, and she put on her mask, and drew down the blinds. Observing that she was closely followed by these soldiers, she gave a signal to her coachman, who instantly whipped up his horses, and drove at a furious rate.

At Nanterre the gendarmes, being reinforced, cried out to the coachman to stop, and obliged Madame Scarron to get out. She was taken to a tavern close by, where they asked her to remove her mask. She made various excuses for not doing so, but at the mention of the lieutenant-general of police, she had to give in.

"Madam," inquired the brigadier, "have you not been in a nunnery?"

"Pray, sir, why do you ask?"

"Be good enough to answer me, madam; I repeat my question, and I insist upon a reply. I have received instructions that I shall not hesitate to carry out."

"I have lived with nuns, but that, sir, was a long while ago."

"It is not a question of time. What was your motive for leaving these ladies, and who enabled you to do so?"

"I left the convent after my first communion. I left it openly, and of my own free will. Pray be good enough to allow me to continue my journey."

"On leaving the convent, where did you go?"

" First to one of my relatives, then to another, and at last to Paris, where I got married."

" Married? What, madam, are you married? Oh, young lady, what behaviour is this? Your simple, modest mien plainly shows what you were before this marriage. But why did you want to get married? "

As he said this, the little Duc du Maine, suffering, perhaps, from a twinge of colic, began to cry. The brigadier, more amazed than ever, ordered the infant to be shown as well.

Seeing that she could make no defence, Madame Scarron began to shed tears, and the officer, touched to pity, said:

" Madam, I am sorry for your fault, for, as I see, you are a good mother. My orders are to take you to prison, and thence to the convent specified by the archbishop, but I warn you that, if we catch the father of your child, he will hang. As for you, who have been seduced, and who belong to a good family, tell me one of your relatives with whom you are on friendly terms, and I will undertake to inform them of your predicament."

Madame Scarron, busy in soothing the Duc du Maine, durst not explain, for fear of aggravating matters, but begged the brigadier to take her back to Saint-Germain.

At this juncture my brother arrived on his way back to Paris. He recognised the carriage which stood before the inn, with a crowd of peasants round it, and hastened to rescue the governess, for he soon succeeded in persuading these worthy police officers that the sobbing dame was not a runaway nun, and that the new-born infant came of a good stock.

CHAPTER XXI

THE SAINT-DENIS VIEW — SUPERSTITIONS, APPARITIONS —PROJECTED ENLARGEMENT OF VERSAILLES—FRESH VICTIMS FOR SAINT-DENIS.

ONE evening I was walking at the far end of the long terrace of Saint-Germain. The King soon came thither, and pointing to Saint-Denis, said: "That, madam, is a gloomy, funereal view which makes me displeased and disgusted with this residence, fine though it be."

"Sire," I replied, "in no other spot could a more magnificent view be found. Yonder river winding afar through the vast plain, that noble forest divided by hunting roads into squares, that Calvary poised high in air, those bridges placed here and there to add to the attractiveness of the landscape, those flowery meadows set in the foreground as a rest to the eye, the broad stream of the Seine, which seemingly is fain to flow at a slower

rate below your palace windows; I do not think that any more charming combination of objects could be met with elsewhere, unless one went a long way from the capital."

"The château of Saint-Germain no longer pleases me," replied the King. "I shall enlarge Versailles and withdraw thither. What I am going to say may astonish you, perhaps, as it comes from me, who am neither a whimsical female nor a prey to superstition. A few days before the Queen, my mother, had her final seizure, I was walking here alone in this very spot. A reddish light appeared above the monastery of Saint-Denis, and a cloud which rose out of the ruddy glare assumed the shape of a hearse bearing the arms of Austria. A few days afterwards my poor mother was removed to Saint-Denis. Four or five days before the horrible death of our adorable Henriette, the arrows of Saint-Denis appeared to me in a dream covered in dusky flames, and amid them I saw the spectre of Death, holding in his hand the necklaces and bracelets of a young lady. The appalling death of my cousin followed close upon this presage. Henceforth, the view of Saint-Denis spoils all these

pleasant landscapes for me. At Versailles fewer objects confront the eye; a park of that sort has its own wealth of natural beauty, which suffices. I shall make Versailles a delightful resort, for which France will be grateful to me, and which my successors can neither neglect nor destroy without bringing to themselves dishonour."

I sympathised with the reasons which made Saint-Germain disagreeable to His Majesty. Next summer the causes for such aversion became more numerous, as the King had the misfortune to lose the daughters which the Queen bore him, and they were carried to Saint-Denis.

CHAPTER XXII

M. DE LAUZUN — HIS PRETENSIONS — ERRONEOUS IDEAS OF THE PUBLIC — THE WAR IN CANDIA — M. DE LAUZUN THINKS HE WILL SECURE A THRONE FOR HIMSELF — THE KING DOES NOT WISH THIS.

THE Marquis de Guilain de Lauzun was, and still is, one of the handsomest men at Court. Before my marriage, vanity prompted him to belong to the list of my suitors, but as his reputation in Paris was that of a man who had great success with the ladies, my family requested him either to come to the point or to retire, and he withdrew, though unwilling to break matters off altogether.

When he saw me in the bonds of matrimony, and enjoying its liberty, he recommenced his somewhat equivocal pursuit of me, and managed to get himself talked about at my expense. Society was unjust; M. de Lauzun only dared to pay me homage of an insipid sort. He had success enough in other quarters, and I knew what I owed to someone as well as what I owed to myself.

Ambition is the Marquis's ruling passion. The simple rôle of a fine gentleman is, in his eyes, but a secondary one; his Magnificency requires a far more exalted platform than that.

When he knew that war in Candia had broken out, and which side the Kings of Christendom would necessarily take, his ideas became more exalted still. He bethought himself of the strange fortunes of certain valiant warriors in the time of the Crusades. He saw that the Lorraines, the Bouillons and the Lusignans had won sceptres and crowns, and he flattered himself that the name of Lauzun might in this vast adventurous career gain glory too.

He begged me to get him a command in this army of Candia, wherein the King had just permitted his own kinsmen to go and win laurels for themselves. He was already a full colonel of dragoons, and one of the captains of the guard. The King, who till then liked him well enough, considered such a proposition indecent, and, gauging or not gauging his intentions, he postponed until a later period these aspirations of Lauzun to the post of prince or sovereign.

CHAPTER XXIII

THE ABBÉ D'ESTRÉES — SINGULAR OFFERS OF SERVICE — MADAME DE MONTESPAN DECLINES HIS OFFER OF INTERCESSION AT THE VATICAN — HE REVENGES HIMSELF UPON THE KING OF PORTUGAL — DIFFERENCE BETWEEN A FAIR MAN AND A DARK.

SINCE the reign of Gabrielle d'Estrées, who died just as she was about to espouse her King, the d'Estrées family were treated at Court more with conventional favour than with esteem. The first of that name was lieutenant-general, destined to wield the bâton of a French marshal, on account of his ancestry as well as his own personal merit. The Abbé d'Estrées passed for being in the Church what M. de Lauzun was in Society—a man who always met with success, and who also was madly ambitious.

While still very young, he had been appointed to the bishopric of Laon, which, in conjunction with two splendid abbeys, brought him in a hand-

some revenue. The Duke and Duchess of Vendôme were as fond of him as one of their own kin, doing nothing without first consulting him, everywhere praising and extolling his abilities, which were worthy of a ministry.

This prelate desired above all things to be made a cardinal. Under Henry IV. he could easily have had his wish, but at that time he was not yet born. He imagined that on the strength of my credit he could procure the *biretta* for himself.

As soon as he saw me recognised as a mistress he paid assiduous court to me, never losing an opportunity of everywhere sounding my praise. One day he said to me: "Madam, everyone pities you on account of the vexation and grief which the Marquis de Montespan has caused you. If you will confide in me—that is, if you will let me represent your interests with the Cardinals and the Holy Father—I heartily offer you my services as mediator and advocate with regard to the question of nullity. At an early age I studied theology and ecclesiastical law. Your marriage may be considered null and void, according to this or that point of view. You know that upon the death of

the Princess de Nemours, Mademoiselle de Nemours and Mademoiselle d'Aumale, her two daughters, came to reside with Madame de Vendôme, my cousin, a relative and a friend of their mother. The eldest I first of all married to Duke Charles of Lorraine, heir to the actual Duke of Lorraine. His Majesty did not approve of this marriage, which was contrary to his politics. His Majesty deigned to explain himself and open out to me upon the subject. I at once consulted my books, and found all the means necessary for dissolving such a marriage. So true, indeed, is this, that I forthwith re-married Mademoiselle de Nemours to the Duke of Savoy; this took place under your very eyes. Soon afterwards I married her younger sister to the King of Portugal, and accompanied her to Lisbon, where the Portuguese gave her a fairly warm reception. Her young husband is tall and fair, with a pleasant, distinguished face; he loves his wife, and is only moderately beloved in return. Is she wrong or is she right? Now, I will tell you. The Monarch is well-made, but a childish infirmity has left one whole side of him somewhat weak, and he limps. Mademoiselle

d'Aumale, or to speak more correctly, the Queen of Portugal, writes letter upon letter to me, describing her situation. She believed herself pregnant, and had even announced the news to Madame de Vendôme, as well as to Madame de Savoie, her sister. Now, it appears that this is not the case. She is vexed and disgusted. I am about to join her at Lisbon. She is inclined to place the crown upon the young brother of the King, requesting the latter to seek the seclusion of a monastery. I can see that this new idea of the youthful Queen's will necessitate my visiting the Vatican. Allow me, madam, to have charge of your interests. Do not have the slightest fear but that I shall protect them zealously and intelligently, killing thus two birds with one stone."

"Pray accept my humble thanks," I replied to the Bishop. "The reigning Sovereign Pontiff has never shown me any favour whatever, and is in nowise one of my friends. What you desire to do for me at Rome deserves some signal mark of gratitude in return, but I cannot get you a Cardinal's hat, for a thousand reasons.

"Mademoiselle de Nemours, when leaving us,

promised to hate me as long as she lived, and to have me burnt as an *auto da fé* whenever she got the chance. Do not let her know that you have any regard for me, or you might lose her affection.

"I hope that the weak side of her husband, the King, may get stronger, and that you will not help to put the young Monarch in a convent of monks.

"In any case, my lord Bishop, do not breathe it to a living soul that you have told me of such strange resolutions as these; for my own part, I will safely keep your secret, and pray God to have you in His holy keeping."

The Bishop of Laon was not a man to be rebuffed by pleasantry such as this. He declared the King of Portugal to be impotent, after what the Queen had expressly stated. The Pope annulled the marriage, and the Queen courageously wedded her husband's brother, who had no congenital weakness of any sort, and who was, as everyone knew, of dark complexion.

At the request of the Queen, the Bishop of Laon was afterwards presented with the hat, and is, to-day, my lord Cardinal d'Estrées.

CHAPTER XXIV

MADEMOISELLE DE VALOIS—MADEMOISELLE D'ORLÉANS—MADEMOISELLE D'ALENÇON—M. DE SAVOIE—HIS LOVE-LETTERS—HIS MARRIAGE WITH MADEMOISELLE DE VALOIS—M. DE GUISE AND MADEMOISELLE D'ALENÇON—THEIR MARRIAGE CEREMONY—MADAME DE MONTESPAN'S DOG—MADEMOISELLE D'ORLÉANS—HER MARRIAGE WITH THE DUKE OF TUSCANY—THE BISHOP DE BONZY.

By his second wife, Marguerite de Lorraine, Gaston de France had three daughters, and being devoid of energy, ability, or greatness of character, they did not object when the King married them to Sovereigns of the third-rate order.

Upon these three marriages I should like to make some remarks, on account of certain singular details connected therewith, and because of the joking to which they gave rise.

Mademoiselle de Montpensier had flatly refused the Duke of Savoy, because Madame de Savoie, daughter of Henry IV., was still living, ruling her

estate like a woman of authority, and, therefore, to this stepmother, a King's daughter, mademoiselle had to give way, she being but the daughter of a French Prince who died in disgrace, and was forgotten.

Being refused by the elder Princess, M. de Savoie, still quite young, sought the hand of her sister, Mademoiselle de Valois. He wrote her a letter which, unfortunately, was somewhat singular in style, and which, unfortunately too, fell into the hands of Mademoiselle de Montpensier. Like her late father, Gaston, she plumed herself upon her wit and eloquence; she caused several copies of the effusion to be printed and circulated at Court. I will include it in these Memoirs, as it cannot but prove entertaining. The heroes of Greece, and even of Troy, possibly delivered their compliments in somewhat better fashion, if we may judge by the version preserved for us by Homer.

FROM HIS ROYAL HIGHNESS THE DUKE OF SAVOY TO HIS MOST HONOURED COUSIN, MADEMOISELLE DE VALOIS.

MY DEAR COUSIN,—As the pen must needs perform the office of the tongue, and as it expresses the

feelings of my heart, I doubt not but that I am at great disadvantage; since the depth of these feelings it cannot express, nor rightly convince you that, having given all myself to you, nothing remains either to give or to desire, save to find such affection pleasantly reciprocated. Thus, in these lines, I earnestly beseech you to return my love, lines which give you the first hints of that fire which your many lovely qualities have lighted in my soul. They create in me an inconceivable impatience closely to contemplate that which now I admire at a distance, and to convince you by various proofs, that, with matchless loyalty and passion,

I am, dear Cousin,

Your most humble slave and servant,

EMMANUEL.

Gentle as an angel, Mademoiselle de Valois desired just what everybody else did.

The youngest of the three Princesses was named Mademoiselle d'Alençon. With a trifle more wit and dash, she could have maintained her position at Court, where so charming a face as hers was fitted to make its mark; but her fine dark eyes did but express indifference and vacuity, seemingly unconscious of the pleasure to be got in this world when one is young, good-looking, shapely, a princess of the blood, and cousin-german of the King besides.

Marguerite de Lorraine, her mother, married her to the Duke of Guise, their near relative, who, without ambition or pretension, seemed almost astonished to see that the King gave, not a dowry, but a most lovely *verdure*,[1] and an enamelled dinner-service.

The marriage was celebrated at the château, without any special ceremonies or preparations; so much so, that two cushions, which had been forgotten, had to be hastily fetched. I saw what was the matter, and motioning the two attendants of the royal sacristy, I whispered to them to fetch what was wanted from my own apartment.

Not knowing to what use these cushions were to be put, my *valet de chambre* brought the flowered velvet ones, on which my dogs were wont to lie. I noticed this just as Their Highnesses were about to kneel down, and I felt so irresistibly inclined to laugh, that I was obliged to retire to my room to avoid bursting out laughing before everybody.

Fortunately the Guises did not get to know of this little detail until long after, or they might have imagined that it was a planned piece of

1 Drawing-room tapestry, much in vogue at that time.

malicious mockery. However, it is only fair to admit that the marriage was treated in a very off-hand way, and it is that which always happens to people whose modesty and candour hinder them from posing and talking big when they get the chance. A strange delusion, truly!

Mademoiselle d'Orléans, the eldest child of the second marriage, is considered one of the prettiest and most graceful of blondes. Her endowments were surely all that a princess could need, if one except reserve in speaking, and a general dignity of deportment.

When it was a question of giving her to Prince Médicis, Grand Duke of Tuscany, she was all the while sincerely attached to handsome Prince Charles of Lorraine, her maternal cousin. But the King, who, in his heart of hearts, wanted to get hold of Lorraine for himself, could not sanction this union; nay, he did more, he opposed it. Accordingly the Princess, being urged to do so by her mother, consented to go to Italy, and, as we say at Court, expatriate herself.

The Bishop of Béziers, named de Bonzy, the Tuscan chargé d'affaires, came, on behalf of the

Médicis family, to make formal demand of her hand, and had undertaken to bring her to her husband with all despatch. He had undertaken an all too difficult task.

"Monsieur de Bonzy," said she to the prelate, "as it is you who here play the part of interpreter and cavalier of honour; as it is you, moreover, who have to drag me away from my native country, I have to inform you that it is my intention to leave it as slowly as possible, and to contemplate it at my leisure before quitting it for ever."

And, indeed, the Princess desired to make a stay more or less long in every town *en route*. If, on the way, she noticed a convent of any importance, she at once asked to be taken thither, and, in default of other pastime or pretext, she requested them to say Complines, with full choral accompaniment.

If she saw some castle or other, she inquired the name of its owner, and, though she hardly knew the inmates, was wont to invite herself to dinner and supper.

The Bishop of Béziers grew disconsolate. He wrote letters to the Court, which he sent by special

courier, and I said to the King: "Pray, Sire, let her do as she likes; she will surely have time enough to look at her husband later on."

Near Saint-Fargeau, when the Princess heard that this estate was her sister's, mademoiselle sent a gentleman, with her compliments, to ask if she would give her shelter for twenty-four hours. Instead of twenty-four hours' stay, she proceeded to take up her abode there, and, provided with a gun and dogs, she wandered all over the fields, always accompanied by the worthy Bishop, at whose utter exhaustion she was highly amused.

At length she left her native land, and joined her husband, who seemed somewhat sulky at all this delay.

"I cannot love you just yet," quoth she, weeping, "my heart is still another's, and it is impossible to break off such attachments without much time and much pain. Pray treat me with gentleness, for, if you are severe, I shall not do you any harm, but I shall go back to the Luxembourg to my mother."

CHAPTER XXV

RANDOM RECOLLECTIONS—MADAME DE MONTESPAN WITHDRAWS FROM POLITICS—THE QUEEN'S DOWRY—FIRST CAMPAIGN IN FLANDERS—THE QUEEN MEETS THE KING—SOMEONE ELSE SEES HIM FIRST—THE QUEEN'S ANGER AT LA VALLIÈRE.

In compiling these Memoirs, I have never pretended to keep a strictly regular diary where events are set down chronologically and in their proper order. I write as I recollect; some of my recollections are chronicled sooner, and others later. Thus, it happens that the King's first conquests are only now mentioned in the present chapter, although they occurred in the year 1667, at the beginning of my credit and my favour.

I was naturally inclined for politics, and should have liked the hazard of the game; but I suppose that the King considered me more frivolous and giddy than I really was, for, despite the strong

friendship with which he has honoured me, he has never been gracious enough to initiate me into the secrets of the Cabinet and the State.

If this sort of exclusion or ostracism served to wound my self-respect, it nevertheless had its special advantage for me, for in epochs less glorious or less brilliant (that is to say, in times of failure), they could never cavil at advice or counsel which I had given, nor blame me for the shortcomings of my protégés or creatures.

The King was born ambitious. This Prince will not admit it; he gives a thousand reasons in justification of his conquests. But the desire for conquest proves him to be a conqueror, and one is not a conqueror without being ambitious. I think I can explain myself by mentioning the treaty drawn up at the time of his marriage. It was stipulated that the Infanta should have rights over the Netherlands, then possessed by Don Balthazar, Prince of Spain. But it was agreed to give the Princess Marie Thérèse a handsome dowry, in lieu of which she signed a paper renouncing her rights.

Her father, King Philip IV., died at the close

of the year 1665, and the Queen-mother besought our King not to take advantage of the minority of the young Charles II., his brother-in-law, by troubling Spain afresh with his pretensions.

Hardly had Anne of Austria been interred, than the King informed the Spanish Court of his claims. In the spring of the following year, he himself led an army into Spanish Flanders, where his appearance was not expected. These fine provinces, badly provisioned and badly fortified, made but a merely formal resistance to Condé, Turenne, Créqui, and all our illustrious generals, who, led by the King in person, wrought the troops to a wild pitch of enthusiasm.

The King had left the Infanta, his wife, at Compiègne, and it was there that we awaited either news of the army or orders to advance.

From Compiègne we went to La Fère, where we heard that the King was coming to receive us. Suddenly it was rumoured that the Duchesse de la Vallière had just arrived, and that she was acting *in accordance with orders* received.

The Queen began to weep, and, sobbing, bewailed her destiny. She was seized by convulsions

and violent retching, much to the alarm of her ladies and the physicians.

Next day, after Mass, the Duchesse and the Marquise de la Vallière came to make their curtsey to the Queen, who, staring at them, said not a word. When dinner-time came, she gave orders that no food should be served to them. But the officials supplied this to them in secret, fearing to be compromised.

In the coach the Queen complained greatly of Mademoiselle de la Vallière, and the Princess de Bade, one of the ladies-in-waiting, said to me: "Could you have believed that, with such gentleness, one could also display such impudence?" The Duchesse de Montausier, I know not why, expressed herself to me in the same terms of amazement. I replied that, "were I in that fair lady's place, I should dare to show myself least of all to the Queen, for fear of grieving Her Majesty." I was often rebuked afterwards for this speech, which, I admit, I delivered somewhat thoughtlessly.

On leaving La Fère, the Queen gave particular orders to let the Duchesse have no relays, so that

she could not follow; but the Master of the Horse had caused these to be brought for her from Versailles, so nothing was wanting.

On putting my head out of window, when we turned a corner of the road, I saw that la Vallière's coach, with six horses, was following quite close behind; but I took care not to tell the Queen, who believed those ladies were a long way off.

All at once, on a height, we saw a body of horsemen approaching. The King could be plainly distinguished, riding at their head. La Vallière's coach immediately left the main road, and drove across country, while the Queen called out to have it stopped; but the King embraced its occupants, and then it drove off at a gallop to a château already fixed upon for its reception.

I like to be just, and it is my duty to be so. This mark of irreverence towards the Queen is the only one for which Mademoiselle de la Vallière can be blamed; but she would never have done such a thing of her own accord; it was all the fault of the Marchioness, blinded, as she was, by ambition.

CHAPTER XXVI

THE KING CONTEMPLATES THE CONQUEST OF HOLLAND — THE GRAND SIGNIOR'S EMBASSY — MADAME DE MONTESPAN'S CHANCE OF BECOMING FIRST LADY OF THE HAREM — ANXIETY TO CONCLUDE NEGOTIATIONS WITH SO PASSIONATE AN AMBASSADOR — HELP SENT TO CANDIA—WITH DISASTROUS RESULTS—DEATH OF THE DUC DE BEAUFORT—WHY IT IS GOOD TO CARRY ABOUT THE PICTURE OF ONE'S LADY-LOVE.

HAVING gained possession of the Netherlands in the name of the Infanta, his consort, the King seriously contemplated the subjugation of the Dutch, and possibly also the invasion of these rich countries. Meanwhile, he privately intimated as much to the Princes of Europe, promising to each of them some personal and particular advantage in exchange for a guarantee of assistance or neutrality in this matter.

The Grand Signior, hearing that the Pope

and the Venetians were urging our Cabinet to come to the help of Candia,[1] lost no time in sending a splendid embassy to Paris, to congratulate the young King upon his conquest of Flanders, and to predict for him all success in the paths along which ambition might lead him.

Being naturally fond of show and display, the King left nothing undone which might give brilliance to the reception of so renowned an embassy. The Court wore an air of such splendour and magnificence that these Mussulmans, used though they were to Asiatic pomp, seemed surprised and amazed at so brilliant a reception, at which nothing, indeed, had been forgotten.

The ambassador-in-chief was a pleasant young man, tall, shapely, and almost as good-looking as the King. This Turk had splendidly-shaped hands, and eyes that shone with extraordinary brilliance. He conceived an ardent passion for me, a passion that went to such lengths that he sacrificed thereto all his gravity, all his stately Ottoman demeanour.

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1 This important island of Candia, the last powerful bulwark of Christendom against the Turk, belonged, at that time, to Venice.—EDITOR'S NOTE.

When I passed by, he saluted me, placing his hand to his heart, stopping to gaze at me intently, and watch me as long as possible. Being introduced (either by chance or design) to my Paris jeweller, he seized a gold box upon which he saw my portrait, and, giving the jeweller a considerable sum, refused to part with the picture, however much they begged him to do so.

One fine morning, in spite of his turban, he got into the large chapel of the château during Mass, and while the Court of France was adoring the very God, Ibrahim knelt down in front of me, which made everyone laugh, including the King.

All such absurdities caused the ministers to give him the required reply with all speed, and they were not backward in granting him a farewell audience.

When the time came for him to go, Ibrahim burst into tears, exclaiming that, in his country, I should be in the first rank, whereas at Saint-Germain I was only in the second; and he charged his interpreter to tell the King of France that the unhappy Ibrahim would never get over this visit to his Court.

The King replied, with a smile, that he had "better become a Christian, and stay with us."

At these words the ambassador turned pale, and, glancing downwards, withdrew, forgetting to salute His Majesty.

Then he returned, and made all his bows quite nicely, nor would he quit the capital before he had sent me his portrait, some pretty verses in Italian, which he had caused to be composed, and, besides this, a set of amber ornaments, the most beautiful of any worn by ladies of the harem.

Despite this imposing and costly embassy, despite the ambassador's compliment, who referred to the King as "Eldest Son of the Sun," this same Son of the Sun despatched seven thousand picked troops to help Venice against the Turks. To this detachment the Venetian Republic sent fourteen vessels laden with their own soldiers, under the leadership of our Duc de Beaufort, Grand Admiral of France, and Lieutenant-general the Duc de Navailles.

Had these troops arrived in the nick of time, they would have saved Candia, but by a sudden accident all was lost, and after so terrible a reverse

the Isle of Candia, wrested from the potentates of Europe and Christendom, fell a prey to the infidels.

A pistol-shot fired at a Turk blew up several barrels of gunpowder belonging to a large magazine captured from the enemy. Our troops thinking that a mine had been sprung, fled in headlong confusion, never even caring to save their muskets. The Turks butchered them in the most frightful manner. In this huge massacre, some of our most promising officers perished, and the Duc de Beaufort was never found either among the wounded or the slain.

The young Comte de Guiche, of whom I shall presently speak, had his hand smashed, and if on his breast he had not worn a portrait of madame,[1] the sword of a Turk would have struck him to the heart.

The King felt sorry that he had only despatched seven thousand men thither. But when M. de Louvois informed him that the whole detachment had been almost annihilated, he regretted having sent so many.

1 The ill-fated Duchess of Orleans.

CHAPTER XXVII

DANGER OF HARBOURING A MALCONTENT—THE KING'S POLICY WITH REGARD TO LORRAINE — ADVICE OF MADAME DE THIANGES—CONQUEST OF LORRAINE—THE LORRAINES SURRENDER TO THE EMPEROR.

THE petty princes placed too near a great potentate are just like the shrubs that grow beside an old oak tree, whose broad shade blights them, while its roots undermine and sap them, till at last they are weakened and destroyed.

When young Gaston, son of Henry IV., seeking to get free from Richelieu's insolent despotism, withdrew to the Duc de Lorraine, the Cardinal uttered a cry of joy, and remarked to Louis XIII., that vindictive, jealous Prince: "Oh, what a good turn the Duke of Orleans has just done you to-day! By going to stay with M. de Lorraine, he will oust him!"

The Court soon got to know that M. de

Lorraine had given Monsieur a most cordial reception, and that the latter, who, like his father, was very susceptible, had proposed for the hand of the Princess Marguerite, a charming person, and sister to the reigning Duke.

King Louis XIII. openly opposed this marriage, which nevertheless was arranged for, and celebrated partly at Nancy and partly at Lunéville.

Such complacence earned for M. de Lorraine the indignation of the King and his minister, the Cardinal. They waged against him a war of revenge, or rather of *spoliation*, and as the Prince, being unable then to offer any serious resistance, was sensible enough to surrender, he got off with the sacrifice of certain portions of his territory. He also had to witness the demolition by France of the fine fortifications of Nancy.

Things were at this juncture when our young King assumed the management of affairs. The policy pursued by Louis XIII. and his Cardinal seemed to him an advantageous one also; he lured to his capital M. de Lorraine, who was still young and a widower, and by every conceivable pretext he was prevented from marrying again. Lorraine had

a nephew,[1] a young man of great promise, to whom the uncle there and then offered to make over all his property and rights, if the King would honour him with his protection and marry him to whomsoever he fancied. The King would not consent to a marriage of any kind, having a firm, persistent desire in this way to make the line of these two Princes extinct.

I was talking about this one day in the King's chamber, when my sister de Thianges had the hardihood to say:

"I hear that the Messieurs de Lorraine are about to take their departure, and that, having lost all hope of making themselves beloved, they have resolved to make themselves feared."

The King looked impassively at my sister, showing not a sign of emotion, and he said to her:

"Do you visit there?"

"Sire," replied Madame de Thianges, unabashed, "augment the number not of your enemies, but of your friends; of all policies that is the best." The King never said a word.

Soon afterwards, the Lorraines appealed secretly

1 Prince Charles.

to the Empire and the Emperor. The King was only waiting for such an opportunity; he forthwith sent Marshal de Créqui at the head of twenty thousand men, who invaded Lorraine, which had already been ravaged, and the duchy of Bar, which had not.

The manifesto stated the motives for such complaint, alleging *that the Duke had not been at the pains to observe the Treaty of Metz with regard to the surrender of Marsal*, and, as a punishment, his entire sovereignty would be confiscated.

A large army then marched upon Peronne; it had been formed at Saint-Germain, and was divided into two columns. The first went to join the Duc de Créqui, who occupied Lorraine; the other took up its position near Sédan, to keep the Flemish and Dutch in check in case of any attempted rebellion.

The Lorraines, in despair, gave themselves up to the Emperor, who, aware of their fine soldierly qualities, bestowed upon both high posts of command. They caused great losses to France and keen anxiety to her King.[1]

1 It is a descendant of Prince Charles who to-day wears the Imperial crown of Austria.—EDITOR'S NOTE.

CHAPTER XXVIII

EMBASSY OF THE KING OF ARDA—POLITICAL INFLUENCE EXERCISED BY THE GOOD LOOKS OF MADAME DE MONTESPAN — GIFTS OF THE ENVOYS — WHAT THE DUC DE VEXIN TAKES FOR A HORSE — MADAME DE MONTESPAN ENTERTAINS THEM IN HER OWN HOUSE —THREE MISSIONARIES RECOMMEND HER TO THEM.

FROM the wilds of Africa, the King of Arda sent an embassy no less brilliant, and far more singular, than that of the Turks. This African Prince, hearing of the French King's noble character and of his recent conquests, proposed to form with him a political and commercial alliance, and sought his support against the English and the Dutch, his near neighbours.

The King said to me: "Madam, I expect Ibrahim has proclaimed your charms even to the Africans; you bring embassies to me from the other end of the globe. For Heaven's sake, don't show yourself, or these new envoys will utterly lose their heads, too."

The envoys referred to were notable for their rich, semi-barbaric dress, but not one of them was like Ibrahim. They brought the King a present, in the shape of a tiger, a panther and two splendid lions. To the Queen, they gave a sort of pheasant covered with gold and blue feathers, which burst out laughing while looking intensely grave, to the great diversion of everyone. They also brought to the Princess a little blackamoor, extremely well-made, who could never grow any bigger, and of which she, unfortunately, grew very fond.[1]

These Africans also came in ceremonious fashion to present their respects to me. They greeted me as the "second spouse of the King" (which greatly offended the Queen), and, in the name of the King of Arda, they presented me with a necklace of large pearls and two bracelets of priceless value—splendid Oriental sapphires, the finest in the world.

I gave orders for my children to be brought to them. On seeing these, they prostrated themselves. The little Comte de Vexin, profiting by

1 Later on, the writer explains herself more fully.—EDITOR'S NOTE.

their attitude, began to ride pick-a-back on one of them, who did not seem offended at this, but carried the child about for a little while.

The ceremony of their presentation will, doubtless, have been described in various other books; but I cannot forbear mentioning one incident. As soon as the curtains of the throne were drawn aside, and they saw the King wearing all his decorations and ablaze with jewels, they put their hands up to their eyes, pretending to be dazzled by the splendour of his presence, and then they flung themselves down at full length upon the ground, the better to express their adoration.

I invited them to visit me at the Château de Clagny, my favourite country seat, and there I caused a sumptuous collation to be served to them in accordance with their tastes. Plain roast meat they ate with avidity; other dishes seemed to inspire them with distrust; they looked closely at them, and then went off to something else.

I do not interfere in affairs of State, but I wanted to know from what source, in so remote a country, they could have obtained any positive information as to the secrets of the Court of

France. Through the interpreter, they replied that three travellers — missionaries — had stayed for a couple of months with their master, the King of Arda, and the good fathers had told them "that Madame de Montespan was the second spouse of the great King." These same missionaries had chosen the sort of presents which they were to give me.

CHAPTER XXIX

COMTE DE VEXIN, ABBÉ OF SAINT-GERMAIN DES PRÉS—REVENUES REQUIRED, BUT NOT THE COWL—DISCUSSION BETWEEN THE KING AND THE MARQUISE—MADAME SCARRON CHOSEN AS ARBITER—AN UNANSWERABLE ARGUMENT.

THE wealthy abbey of Saint-Germain des Prés[1] was vacant; the King appointed thereto his son, the Comte de Vexin, and as the Benedictine monks secretly complained that they should have given to them as chief a child almost still in its cradle, the King instructed the grand almoner to remind them that they had had as abbés in preceding reigns Princes who were married, and of warlike tastes. "Such abuses," said the prelate, "were more than reprehensible; His Majesty is incapable of wishing to renew them. As to the Prince's extreme youth, that is in no way prejudicial to you, my brethren, as monseigneur will be suitably represented by his

1 Yielding a revenue of five hundred thousand livres.

Vicar-General until such time as he is able to assume the governorship himself."

"Is it your intention to condemn my son to be an ecclesiastic?" I asked the King, in amazement.

"Madame, these are my views," he answered. "If the Comte de Vexin as he grows up should continue to show pluck and a taste for things military, as by birth he is bound to do, we will relieve him of the abbey on the eve of his marriage, while he will have profited thereby up to that time. If, on the contrary, my son should show but inferior mental capacity, and a pusillanimous character, there will be no harm in his remaining among the Church folk; he will be far better off there than elsewhere. The essential thing for a parent is to study carefully and in good time the proper vocation for his children; the essential thing for the ruler of an Empire is to employ the right people to do the work in hand."

"Will my son, on receiving this abbey, have to wear the dress of his office?" I asked. "Imagine the Comte de Vexin an abbé!"

"Do not feel the slightest repugnance on that score," added the King. "The Electors of the

German Empire are nearly all of them ecclesiastics; our own history of France will show you that the sons of kings were bishops or mere abbés; the grandson of the Duke of Savoy is a cardinal and an archbishop, and King Charles X., my grandfather's paternal uncle, nearly became King of France and cardinal at one and the same time."

At this moment Madame Scarron came in. "Madame, we will make you our judge in the argument that we are now having," said His Majesty. "Do you think there is any objection to our giving to little Vexin the dress of an abbé?"

"On the contrary, Sire," replied the governess, smiling, "such a dress will inspire him betimes with reserve and modesty, strengthening his principles, and making far more profitable to him the excellent education which he is now receiving."

"I am obliged to you for your opinion," said the King, "and I flatter myself, madam, that you see things in the same light that I do."

When the King had gone, Madame Scarron asked me why I disapproved of this abbey.

"I do not wish to deny so rich a benefice to my son," I replied, "but it seems to me that he

might enjoy the revenues therefrom, without being obliged to wear the livery. Is not the King powerful enough to effect this?"

"You are hardly just, madam," replied the governess, in a serious tone. "If our religion be a true one, God Himself is at the head of it, and for so supreme a Chief the sons of kings are but of small account."

With an argument such as this she closed my mouth, leaving me quite amazed, and next day she smiled with delight when she presented the little Comte de Vexin dressed as a little abbé.

She was careful to see that the crozier, mitre and cross were painted on the panels of his carriage, and let the post of Vicar-General be given to one of her pious friends who was presented to me.

CHAPTER XXX

ONCE A QUEEN, ALWAYS A QUEEN — AN ANONYMOUS LETTER — THE QUEEN'S CONFIDENCE — SHE HAS A SERMON PREACHED AGAINST MADAME DE MONTESPAN— WHO THE PREACHER WAS—ONE SCANDAL MAY AVERT ANOTHER.

I RELATED how, near La Fère, at the time of the Flanders campaign, Madame de la Vallière's coach, at the risk of offending the Queen, left the main road and took a short cut across country, so as to get on ahead, and arrive before anybody else. By this the Duchesse thought to give her royal friend a great mark of her attachment. On the contrary, it was the first cause for that coolness which the King afterwards displayed.

"Fain would he be beloved, yet loved with tact."

The very next day His Majesty prevailed upon la Vallière to say that such a style of travelling was *too fatiguing* for her. She had the honour of

dining with the Queen, and then she returned to the little château of Versailles, so as to be near her children.

The King arranged with Madame. de Montauzier, lady-in-waiting to the Queen, that I should use her rooms to dress and write in, and that His Majesty should be free to come there when he liked, and have a quiet chat with me about matters of interest.

The Queen, whom I had managed to please by my amusing talk, always kept me close to her side, both when taking long walks or playing cards. At a given signal, a knock overhead, I used to leave the Queen, excusing myself on the score of a headache, or arrears of correspondence; in short, I managed to get away as best I could.

The King left us in order to capture Douai, then Tournay, and finally the whole of Flanders; while the Queen continued to show me every sign of her sincere and trustful friendship.

In August, on the Day of Our Lady, while the King was besieging Lille, a letter came to the Queen, informing her that her husband had forsaken Madame la Vallière for Her Majesty's

lady-in-waiting, the Marquise de Montespan. Moreover, the anonymous missive named "the prudent Duchesse de Montauzier" as confidante and accomplice.

"It is horrible—it is infamous!" cried the Queen, as she flung aside the letter. "I shall never be persuaded that such is the case. My dear little Montespan enjoys my friendship and my esteem; others are jealous of her, but they shall not succeed. Perhaps the King may know the handwriting; he shall see it at once!" And that same evening she forwarded the letter to him.

1672 The Comte de Vexin had been born, and the Queen was absolutely ignorant of his existence. My pregnancy with the Duc du Maine 1670 had likewise escaped her notice, owing to the large *paniers* which I took to wearing, and thus made the fashion. But the Court is a place where the best of friends are traitors. The Queen was at length convinced, after long refusing to be so, and from that day forward she cordially detested me.

While the King was conquering Holland, she instructed her chief almoner to have a sermon of

a scandalous sort to be preached, which, delivered with all due solemnity in her presence, should grieve and wound me as much as possible.

On the day appointed, a preacher, totally unknown to us, gets into the pulpit, makes a long prayer for the guidance of the Holy Ghost, and then, rising gracefully, bows low to the Queen. Raising his eyes to heaven, he makes the sign of the Cross and gives out the following text: "Woman, arise and sin no more. Go hence, I forgive thee."

As he uttered these words, he looked hard at my pew, and soon made me understand by his exordium how interesting his discourse would be to me. Written with rare grace of style, it was merely a piece of satire from beginning to end—of satire so audacious that it was constantly levelled at the King.

The orator brought before us in succession life-like portraits of the Queen, of her august spouse, of my children, of M. de Montespan, and of myself. Upon some he lavished praise; others he vehemently rebuked, while to others he gave tender pity. Anon he caused the lips of his

hearers to curl in irony, and again, roused their indignation or touched them to tears.

Anyone else would have been bored by such a rigmarole; it rather amused me.

That evening, and for a week afterwards, nothing else but this sermon was talked of at Versailles. The Queen had received complete satisfaction. Before me she was at pains not to laugh, and I was pleased to see that her resentment had almost disappeared.

Upon his return, the King was for punishing such an offence as this. Things are not easily hidden from him; His Majesty desired to know the name and rank of the ecclesiastic. The entire Court replied that he was a good-looking young Franciscan.

The chief almoner, being forced to state the monastery from which the preacher came, mentioned the *Cordeliers* of Paris. There it transpired that the monk told off by the prior for this enterprise had been too frightened to execute it, and had sent, as his deputy, a young actor from Orleans — a brother of his, who thus could not say no.

So, as it happened, Queen Marie-Thérèse and her chief almoner (an exemplary person) had caused virtue to be preached to me by a young play-actor! The King dared not take further proceedings in so strange a matter, for fear lest one scandal might not beget a far greater one. It was this that caused Madame Cornuel to remark: "The pulpit is in want of comedians; they work wonders there!"

CHAPTER XXXI

THE KING ALTERS HIS OPINION ABOUT MADAME SCARRON —HE WANTS HER TO ASSUME ANOTHER NAME—HE GIVES HER THE MAINTENON ESTATES — SHE AND MADAME DE MONTESPAN VISIT THESE—A STRANGE STORY.

AT first the King used to feel afraid of Madame Scarron, and seemingly laughed at me when I endeavoured to persuade him that there was nothing affected or singular about her. The Marquis de Béringhen, for some reason or other, had prejudiced His Majesty against her, so that very often, when the King heard that she was visiting me, he never got beyond the vestibule, but at once withdrew. One day she was telling me, in her pleasant, original way, a funny tale about the famous Brancas, and I laughed till I cried again, in fact, until I nearly made myself quite ill.

The King, who was listening at the door, was

greatly tickled by the story. He came in smiling and thoroughly self-possessed. Then, addressing the governess, he said: "Madam, allow me to compliment you and to thank you at the same time. I thought you were of a serious, melancholy disposition, but as I listened to you through the key-hole, I am no longer surprised that you have such long talks with the Marquise. Will you do me the favour of being as amusing some other time if I venture to make one of the party?"

The governess, curtseying, blushed somewhat; and the King continued: "Madam, I am aware of your affection for my children; that is a great recommendation to me; banish all restraint; I take the greatest pleasure in your company."

She replied: "It was the fear of displeasing you which, despite myself, caused me to incur your displeasure."

The King continued: "Madam, I know that the late M. de Scarron was a man of much wit and also of agreeable manners. My cousin, de Beaufort, used to rave about him, but on account of his somewhat free poems, his name lacks weight and dignity. In fact, his name in no way fits so

charming a personality as yours; would it grieve you to change it?"

The governess cleverly replied that all that she owed to the memory of her defunct husband was gratitude and esteem.

"Allow me, then, to arrange matters," added the King. "I am fond of sonorous names; in this I agree with Boileau."

A few days afterwards we heard that the splendid *Maintenon* estates were for sale. The King himself came to inform the widow of this, and, giving her in advance *the fee for education*, he counted out a hundred thousand crowns wherewith instantly to purchase the property.

Forthwith the King compelled her to discard this truly ridiculous author's name, and styled her before everybody Madame de Maintenon.

I must do her the justice to state that her gratitude for the King's liberality was well-nigh exaggerated, while no change was perceptible in her manners and bearing. She had, naturally, a grand, dignified air, which was in strange contrast to the grotesque buffoonery of her poet-husband. Now she is exactly in her proper place, repre-

senting to perfection the governess of a King's children.

Spiteful persons were wont to say that I appeared jealous on seeing her made a Marquise like myself. Good gracious, no! On the contrary, I was delighted; her parentage was well-known to me. The Duchesse de Navailles, my protectress, was a near relative of hers, and M. d'Aubigné, her grandfather, was one of King Henry's two Chief Gentlemen of the Chamber.

Madame de Maintenon's father was, in many respects, greatly to blame. Without being actually dishonest, he squandered a good deal of his fortune, the greater part being pounced upon by his family; and had the King forced these harpies to disgorge, Madame de Maintenon could have lived in opulence, eclipsing several of the personages at Court.

I am glad to be able to do her justice in these Memoirs, to the satisfaction of my own self-respect. I look upon her as my own handiwork, and everything assures me that this is her conviction also, and that she will always bear it in mind.

The King said to us: "Go and see the

Château de Maintenon, and then you can tell me all about it. According to an old book, I find that it was built in the reign of Henri-Deux by Nicolas de Cointerot, the King's minister of finance; a *surintendant's* castle ought to form a noteworthy feature of the landscape."

Madame de Maintenon hereupon told us a most extraordinary story. The lady who sold this marquisate had retired two years previously to the island of Martinique, where she, at the present moment, owned the residence of Constant d'Aubigné, the same house where the new Marquise de Maintenon had spent her childhood with her parents, so that while one of these ladies had quitted the Château de Maintenon in order to live in Martinique, the other had come from Martinique in order to reside at the Château de Maintenon. Truly, the destinies of some are strange in this world.

The château appeared to be large, of solid proportions, and built in a grandly simple style, befitting a minister of dignity and position. The governess shed tears of emotion when setting foot there for the first time. The six priests, whom

the *surintendant* had appointed, officiated in the large chapel or little church attached to the castle.

They approached us in regular procession, presenting holy water, baskets of flowers and fruit, an old man, a child and two little lambs to the Marquise. The villagers, dressed out with flowers and ribbons, also came to pay their respects to her. They danced in the castle courtyard, under our balcony, to the sound of hautbois and bagpipes.

We gave them money, said pleasant things to everybody, and invited all the six clerics to sup with us. These gentry spoke with great respect of the other Madame de Maintenon, who had become disgusted with her property, and with France generally, because, for two winters running, her orange-groves and fig-trees had been frostbitten. She, herself, being a most chilly person, never left off her furs until August. And, in order to avoid looking at or walking upon snow and ice, she fled to the other end of the world.

"The other extreme will bring her back to us," observed Madame de Maintenon to the priests. "Though His Majesty were to give me Martinique

or Saint-Domingo, I certainly would never go and live there myself."

When we returned, all these little details greatly amused the King. He, too, wanted to go and see the castle *of another Fouquet*, but, as we complained of the bad roads, he ordered these to be mended along the entire route.

CHAPTER XXXII

THE SECOND COMTE DE VEXIN—HE IS MADE ABBÉ OF SAINT-DENIS—PRIESTS OR DEVILS?—THE CORONATION DIADEM—ROYALTY JOKES WITH THE MONKS

My poor little Comte de Vexin died. We all mourned for him as he deserved; his pretty face would have made everyone love him; his extreme gentleness had nothing of the savage warrior about it, but, at any rate, he was the best looking cardinal in Christendom. He made such funny speeches that one could not help recollecting them. He was more of a Mortemart than a Bourbon, but that did not prevent the King from idolising him.

The King thought of conferring the abbey of Saint-Germain des Prés upon his younger brother; to this I was opposed, imagining, perhaps without reason, that such succession would bring bad luck. So the King presented him to the Abbey of Saint-Denis, the revenue of which was equally considerable, and he conferred upon him the title of Comte

de Vexin, caring nothing for the remarks I made concerning the similarity of such names and distinctions.

The second Comte de Vexin bid fair to be a man of reflection and of genius. He obviously disliked his little abbé's dress, and we always kept saying: "It's only for the time being, my little fellow."

When, after his nomination, the monks of Saint-Denis came to make their obeisance to him, he asked if they were devils, and continually covered his face so as not to see them.

The King arrived, and with a few flattering words managed to soothe the priests' outraged dignity, and when they asked the little Prince if he would honour them by a visit of inspection to Suger's[1] room, which had just been restored, he replied with a sulky smile: "I'll come and see you, but *with my eyes shut.*"

Then the priests mildly remonstrated, because the coronation diadem had not been brought back to their store of treasures, but was still missing.

1 Suger was Abbé of Saint-Denis, and a famous minister of Queen Blanche.—EDITOR'S NOTE.

"So, in your treasure-house at Saint-Denis you keep all the crowns of all the reigns?" asked the Prince.

"Yes, Sire, and where could they be better guarded than with us? Who has most, may have least."

"With all their rubies, diamonds, sapphires and emeralds?"

"Yes, Sire; and hence the name *treasure*."

The King replied: "If this be the case, I will send you my coronation crown. At that time my brow was not so big; you will find the crown small, I tell you."

Then one of the monks, in the most serious manner, said: "It's not as small as it was; your Majesty has enlarged it a good deal."

Madame de Maintenon burst out laughing, and I was not slow to follow her example; we saw that the King could hardly maintain his gravity. He said to the priest: "My father, you turn a pretty compliment in a most praiseworthy manner; you ought to have belonged to the Jesuits, not to the Benedictines."

We burst out laughing anew, and this convent-

deputation, the gloomiest-looking, most funereal one in the world, managed to cause us some diversion, after all.

To make amends for our apparent frivolity, His Majesty himself took them to see his splendid cabinet of medals and coins, and sent them back to their abbey in Court carriages.

CHAPTER XXXIII

M. DE LAUZUN PROPOSES FOR THE HAND OF MADEMOISELLE DE THIANGES—LETTER FROM THE DUC DE LORRAINE—MADAME DE THIANGES THINKS THAT HER DAUGHTER HAS MARRIED A REIGNING PRINCE—THE KING DISPOSES OTHERWISE—THE DUC DE NEVERS.

THE brilliant Marquis de Lauzun, after paying court to myself, suddenly turned his attention to Mademoiselle de Thianges—my sister's child. If a fine figure and a handsome face, as well as the polished manners of a great gentleman, constitute a good match, M. de Lauzun was, in all respects, worthy of my niece. But this presumptuous nobleman had but a slender fortune. Extravagant, without the means to be so, his debts grew daily greater, and in society one talked of nothing but his lavish expenditure and his creditors. I know that the purses of forty women were at his disposal. I know, moreover, that he

used to gamble like a prince, and I would never marry my waiting-maid to a gambler and a rake.

Both Madame de Thianges and myself rejected his proposals, and though resolved to let him have continued proofs of our good-will, we were equally determined never to accept such a man as son-in-law and nephew.

Hereupon the letter which I am about to transcribe was sent to me by a messenger:—

"PRINCE CHARLES OF LORRAINE TO MADAME LA MARQUISE DE MONTESPAN.

"MADAM, — My unfortunate uncle and I have always loved France, but France has forced us both to break off all relations with her and to become exiles!!! Despite the kindness and generosity wherewith the Imperial Court seeks to comfort us in our misfortune, the perpetual cry of our hearts calls us back to our fatherland—to that matchless land where my ancestors have ever been beloved.

"My uncle is guilty of no crime but that of having formerly received in his palace a son of good King Henry IV., after his humiliation by a shameless minister. My dear uncle proposed to resign all his property in my favour, and to meet the wishes of His Majesty as to the wife that should be mine.

"When my uncle asked for the hand of Mademoiselle de Montpensier, on my behalf, my cousin

replied that a ruined and dismantled throne did not augur well for a dowry, and she further remarked that *we were not on good terms with the King.*

"When I begged Cardinal Mazarin to grant me the hand of the present Madame de Mazarin, his Eminence replied: 'Would you like to be a cardinal? I can manage that; but, as regards my niece, the Queen is going to get her married immediately.'

"When, before God and man, I wedded Mademoiselle de Nemours, whose worthy mother led her to the altar, His Majesty refused to sign the marriage-contract, and told Madame de Nemours that it would never be considered valid.

"Soon afterwards the Bishop of Laon, who has complete influence over Madame de Vendôme, *declared as null and void* a marriage negotiated and consecrated by himself, and thus a bond made in heaven has been broken on earth.

"Such treatment as this, I confess, seemed to us to exceed the bounds of humanity and of justice. My uncle and I quitted France — the France that persecutes and harasses us, that desires the destruction of our family and the forcible union of our territory with her own.

"The late Queen, of illustrious and glorious memory, disapproved of Richelieu's injustice towards us. Under the ministry of the Cardinal, his successor, she often, in noble fashion, held out to us a helping hand. How comes it that the King, who in face is her living image, does not desire to be like her in heart?

"I address myself to you, madam, who by your beauty and spiritual charm, hold such imperious sway over his decisions; and I implore you to undertake our defence. My uncle and I, his rightful and duteous heir, offer the King devoted homage and unswerving fealty. We offer to forget the past, to put our hearts and our swords at his service. Let him withdraw his troops and those standards of his that have brought terror and grief to our unhappy Lorraine. I offer to marry Mademoiselle de Thianges, your beautiful and charming niece, and to make her happy, and to surrender all my estates to the King of France, if I die without male issue or heirs of any sort.

"I know your kind-heartedness, madam, by a niece who is your very picture. In your hands I place her interests and my fate. I await your answer with impatience, and I shall receive it with courage if you fail to obtain that which you ought to obtain.

"Be assured, madam, of my unbounded admiration and respect. "CHARLES."

I at once went to my house at Clagny, whither I privately summoned Madame de Thianges. On reading this letter, my sister was moved to tears, for she had always deeply felt how unjustly this family had been treated. She was also personally attached to this same Prince Charles, whom to see was to love.

We read his letter through thrice, and each

time we found it more admirable; the embarrassing thing was how to dare to let His Majesty know its contents. However temperate the allusions to himself, there was still the reproach of *injustice* and *barbarity* set against the clemency of Anne of Austria, and her generous compassion.

My sister said to me: "Go boldly to work in the matter. Despite your three children, the King leaves you merely a *Marquise;* and for my own part, if my daughter becomes Duchesse de Lorraine, I promise you the *Principality of Vaudemont.*"

"It is quite true," I replied; "his conduct is inexplicable. To Madame Scarron, who was only the governess of his children, he gives one of the first Marquisates of France, while to me, who have borne these three children (with infinite pain) I admit he has only given some jewellery, some money, and this pretty castle of Clagny."

"You are as clever as can be, my dear Athénais," said Madame de Thianges, "but, as a matter of fact, your cleverness is not of a business kind. You don't look after yourself, but let yourself be neglected; you don't push yourself forward enough, nor stand upon your dignity as you ought to do.

"The little lame woman had hardly been brought to bed of Mademoiselle de Blois, than she was made Duchesse de Vaujours and De la Vallière.

"Gabrielle d'Estrées, directly she appeared, was proclaimed Duchesse de Beaufort.

"Diane de Poitiers was Duchesse de Valentinois and a Princess. It's only you who are nobody, and your relations also are about the same! Make the most of this grand opportunity; help the Prince of Lorraine, and the Prince of Lorraine will help you."

On our return from the château, while our resolution was yet firm, we went laughing to the King. He asked the reason of our gaiety. My sister said with her wonted ease: "Sire, I have come to invite you to my daughter's wedding."

"Your daughter? Don't you think I am able to get her properly married?" cried the King.

"Sire, you cannot do it better than I can myself. I am giving her a Sovereign as husband, a Sovereign in every sense of the term."

It seemed to me the King flushed slightly as he rejoined: "A Sovereign on his feet, or a Sovereign overthrown?"

"How do you mean, Sire?" said my sister.

"Madame de Thianges," replied the King, "pray let us be friends. I was informed two days ago of the proposals of the Messieurs de Lorraine; it is not yet time to give them a definite reply. It behoves me to give your daughter in marriage, and I have destined her for the Duc de Nevers, who is wealthy and my friend."

"The Duc de Nevers!" cried my sister, "why, he's cracked for six months in the year."

"Those who are cracked for a whole twelve-month deserve far more pity," replied the King.

Then, turning to me, he observed: "You make no remark, madam? Does your niece's coronation provide you also with illusions?"

I easily perceived that we had been cherishing an utterly fantastic scheme, and I counselled Madame de Thianges to prefer to please the King; and, as she was never able to control her feelings, she sharply replied: "Madame la Marquise, good-day or good-night!"

The King, however, did not relax his persistence in giving us the Duc de Nevers as son-in-law and nephew; and as this young gentleman's one

fault is to require perpetual amusement, partly derived from poetry and partly from incessant travelling, my niece is as happy with him as a woman who takes her husband's place well can be. As soon as he gets to Paris, he wants to return to Rome, and hardly has he reached Rome, than he has the horses put to for Paris.

CHAPTER XXXIV

MADEMOISELLE DE MORTEMART, ABBESS OF FONTEVRAULT —SHE COMES TO COURT—THE CLOISTER—HER SUCCESS AT COURT—HER OPINION RESPECTING MADAME DE MONTESPAN'S INTIMACY WITH THE KING.

My second sister, Mademoiselle de Mortemart, was so unfortunate as to fall in love with a young Knight of Malta, doomed from his birth and by his family to celibacy. Having set out upon his caravans,[1] he was killed in combat by the Algerians.

Such was Mademoiselle de Mortemart's grief, that life became unbearable to her. Beautiful, witty and accomplished, she quitted the world where she was beloved, and, at the age of seventeen, took the veil at Fontevrault.

So severely had she blamed the conduct of Mademoiselle de la Vallière, while often vehemently

1 Sea-fights against the Turks and the pirates of the Mediterranean.—Editor's Note.

denouncing that which she termed the disorder at Court, that, since the birth of the Duc du Maine, I had not gone to the convent to see her. We were like unto persons both most anxious to break off an intimacy and yet who had not done so.

The Duc de Lorraine was known to her. He wrote to her, begging her to make it up with me, so as to further his own ends. To gratify him, and mainly because of her attachment to Prince Charles, my sister actually wrote to me, asking for my intervention and what she termed my support.

Nuns always profess to be, and think that they are, cut off from the world. But the fact is, they care far more for mundane grandeur than we do. Madame de Thianges and her sister would have given their very heart's blood to see my niece the bride of a royal Prince.

One day the King said to me: "The Marquise de Thianges complains that I have as yet done nothing for your family; there is a wealthy abbey that has just become vacant; I am going to give it to your sister, the nun; since last night she is the Abbess of Fontevrault."

I thanked the King, as it behoved me to do, and he added: "Your brother shall be made a Duke at once. I am going to appoint him general of Royal Galleys, and after one or two campaigns he will have a marshal's bâton."

"And what about me, Sire?" said I. "What, may it please Your Majesty, shall I get from the distribution of all these favours and emoluments?" I laughingly asked the question.

"You, madam?" he replied. "To you I made a present of my heart, which is not altogether worthless; yet, as it is possible that, when this heart shall have ceased to beat, you may have to maintain your rank, I will give you the charming retreat of Petit-Bourg, near Fontainebleau."

Saying this, his face wore a sad look, and I was sorry that I asked him for anything. He is fond of giving, and of giving generously, but of his own accord, without the least prompting. Had I refrained from committing this indiscretion, he might, possibly, have made me a Duchess there and then, re-naming Petit-Bourg Royal-Bourg.

The new Abbess of Fontevrault, caring less

now for claustral seclusion, equipped her new residence in very sumptuous style. In a splendid carriage she came to thank the King and kiss hands. With much tact and dignity she encountered the scrutiny of the royal family and of the Court. Her manners showed her to have been a person brought up in the great world, and possessed of all the tact and delicacy which her position as well as mine required.

As she embraced me, she sighed; yet, instantly recovering herself, she made the excuse that so many ceremonious greetings and compliments had fatigued her.

It was not long before the King joined us, who said: "Madam, I never thought that there was much amusement to be got by wearing the veil. Now, you must admit that days in a convent seem very long to anyone who has wit and intelligence."

"Sire," replied my sister, "the first fifteen or twenty months are wearisome, I readily confess. Then comes discouragement; after that, habit; and then one grows resigned to one's fetters from the mere pleasure of existence."

"Did you meet with any good friends among your associates?"

"In such assemblies," rejoined the Abbess, "one can form no attachment or durable friendship. The reason for this is simple. If the companion you choose is *religious* in all sincerity, she is perforce a slave to every little rule and regulation, and to her it would seem like defrauding the Deity to give affection to anyone but to Him. If, by mischance, you meet with someone of sensitive temperament, with a bright intellect that matches your own, you lay yourself open to be the mournful sharer of her griefs, doubts and regrets, and her depression reacts upon you, her sorrow makes your melancholy worse. Meditation conjures up countless illusions and every absurdity imaginable, so that the peaceful service of worship of the Lord becomes a veritable hell peopled by phantoms that groan in torture.

"Oh, madam!" exclaimed the King, "what a picture is this! What a spectacle you present to our view!"

"Formerly [illegible] Mortemart [illegible]

all too rare. The greater number of them are colourless persons, devoid of imagination or fire. To exiles like these, any country, any climate would seem good; to flaccid, crushed natures of this type, every belief would seem authoritative, every religion holy and divine. Fifteen hundred years ago these nuns would have made excellent vestal virgins, watchful and resigned. What they need is abstinence, prohibitions, thwartings, things contrary to nature. By conforming to most rigorous rules, they consider themselves suffering beings who deserve heavy recompense; and the Carmelite or Trappist sister, who macerates herself by the hair-shirt or the cilex, would look upon God as a false and wicked Being, if, after such cruel torment, he did not promptly open to her the gates of Paradise.

"Sire," added the Abbess de Fontevrault, "I have three nuns in my convent who take the Holy Communion every other day, and whom my predecessor could never bring herself to absolve for some old piece of nonsense of twenty years back."

"Do you think you will be able to manage them, madam?" asked the King, laughing.

"I am afraid not," replied my sister. "Those are three one could never manage, and your Majesty on the throne may possibly have fewer difficulties to deal with than the abbess or the prior of a convent."

The King was obliged to quit us to go and see one of the ministers, but he honoured the Abbess by telling her that she was excellent company, of which he could never have too much.

My sister wished to see Madame de Maintenon and the Duc du Maine; so we visited that lady, who took a great liking to the Abbess, which was reciprocated.

When my sister saw the young Duc du Maine, she exclaimed: "How handsome he is! Oh, sister, how fond I shall be of such a nephew!"

"Then," said I, "you will forgive me, won't you, for having given birth to him?"

"When I reproached you," she answered, "I had not yet seen the King. When one has seen him, everything is excusable and everything is right. Embrace me, my dear sister, and do not let us forget that I owe my abbey to you as well as my independence, fortune and liberty."

CHAPTER XXXV

M. DE LAUZUN AND MADEMOISELLE DE MONTPENSIER—MARRIAGE OF THE ONE AND PASSION OF THE OTHER—THE KING SETTLES A MATCH—A SECRET UNION—THE KING SENDS M. DE LAUZUN TO PIGNEROL—THE LIFE HE LEADS THERE—MADEMOISELLE'S LIBERALITY—STRANGE WAY OF ACKNOWLEDGING IT.

THEY are for ever talking about the coquetry of women; men also have their coquetry, but as they show less grace and *finesse* than we do, they do not get half as much attention.

The Marquis de Lauzun, having one day noticed a certain kindly feeling for him in the glances of Mademoiselle, endeavoured to seem to her every day more fascinating and agreeable. The foolish Princess completely fell into the snare, and suddenly giving up her air of noble indifference, which till then had made her life happy, she fell madly in love with a schemer who despised and detested her.

Held back for some months by her pride, as also by the exigencies of etiquette, she only disclosed her sentimental passion by glances and a mutual exchange of signs of approval; but at last she was tired of such self-restraint and martyrdom, and, detaining M. de Lauzun one day in a recess, she placed her *written* offer of marriage in his hand.

The cunning Marquis feigned astonishment, pretending humbly to renounce such honour, while increasing his wiles and fascinations; he even went so far as to shed tears, his most difficult feat of all.

Mademoiselle de Montpensier, older than he by twelve or fourteen years, never suspected that such a disparity of years was visible in her face. When one has been pretty, one imagines that one is still so, and will for ever remain so. Plastered up and powdered, consumed by passion and, above all, blinded by vanity, she fancied that Nature had to obey princes, and that, to favour her, Time would stay his flight.

Though tired and bored with everything, Lauzun, the better to excite her passion, put on

timid, languid airs, like those of some lad fresh from school. Quitting the embraces of some other woman, he played the lonely, pensive, melancholy bachelor, the man absorbed by this sweet, new mystery of love.

Having made mutual avowal of their passion, which was *full of esteem*, Lauzun enquired, merely from motives of caution, as to the Princess's fortune; and she did not fail to tell him everything, even about her plate and jewels. Lauzun's love grew even more ardent now, for she had at least forty millions, not counting her palace.

He asked if, by the marriage, he would become a Prince, and she replied that she, herself, had not sufficient power to do this; that she was most anxious to arrange this, if she could; but, anyhow, that she would make him Duc de Montpensier, with a private uncontrolled income of five hundred thousand livres.

He asked if, on the family coat-of-arms, the husband's coronet was to figure or the wife's; but, as she would not change her name, her arms, she decided, could remain as heretofore — the crown, the fleur-de-lys, and so forth.

He enquired if the children of the marriage would rank as Princes, and she said that she saw nothing to prevent this. He also asked if he would be raised higher in the peerage, and might look to being made a Prince at last, and styled Highness as soon as the contract had been signed.

This caused some doubt and reflection. "The King, my cousin," said Mademoiselle, "is somewhat strict in matters of this sort. He seems to think that the royal family is a new arch-saint, at whom one may only look when prostrate in adoration; all contact therewith is absolutely forbidden. I begin to feel uneasy about this; yes, Lauzun, I have fears for our love and marriage."

"Are you, then, afraid?" asked Lauzun, quite crestfallen.

"I knew how to point the Bastille cannon at the troops of the King," she replied; "but he was very young then. No matter, I will go and see him; if he is my King, I am his cousin; if he has his crotchets, I have my love and my will. He can't do anything, my dear Lauzun; I love you as once he loved la Vallière, as to-day he loves Montespan; I am not afraid of him. As for the

permission, I know our history by heart, and I will prove to him, by a hundred examples, that, from the time of Charlemagne up to the present time, widows and daughters of kings have married mere noblemen. These noblemen may have been most meritorious — I only know them from history—but not one of them was as worthy as you."

So saying, she asked for her fan, her gloves and her horses, and, attended by her grooms-in-waiting, she went to the King in person.

The King listened to her from beginning to end, and then remarked: "You refused the Kings of Denmark, Portugal, Spain and England, and you wish to marry my captain of the guard, the Marquis de Lauzun?"

"Yes, Sire, for I place him above all Monarchs—yourself alone excepted."

"Do you love him immensely?"

"More than I can possibly say; a thousand, a hundred thousand times more than myself."

"Do you think he is equally devoted to you?"

"That would be impossible," she tranquilly answered; "but his love for me is delicate, tender, and such friendship suffices me."

"My cousin, in all that there is self-interest. I entreat you to reflect. The world, as you know, is a mocking world; you want to excite universal derision and injure the respect which is due to the place that I fill."

"Ah, Sire, do not wound me! I fling myself at your feet. Have compassion upon M. de Lauzun, and pity my tears. Do not exercise your power; let him be the consolation of my life; let me marry him."

The King, no longer able to hide his disgust and impatience, said: "Cousin, you are now a good forty-four years old; at that age you ought to be able to take care of yourself. Spare me all your grievances, and do what pleases you."

On leaving Mademoiselle, he came to my apartment and told me about all this nonsense. I then informed him of what I had heard by letter the day before. Lauzun, while still carrying on with the fastest ladies of the Court and the town, had just wheedled the Princess into making him a present of twenty millions—a most extravagant gift.

"This is too much!" exclaimed the King;

and he at once caused a letter to be despatched to Mademoiselle and her lover, telling them that their intimacy must cease, and that things must go no farther.

But the audacious Lauzun found means to suborn a well-meaning simpleton of a priest, who married them secretly the very same day.

The King's indignation and resentment may well be imagined. He had his captain of the guard arrested and sent as a prisoner to Pignerol.

On this occasion, M. de Lauzun complained bitterly of me; he invented the most absurd tales about me, even saying that he had struck me in my own apartments, after taunting me to my face with "our old intimacy."

That is false; he reproached me with nothing, for there was nothing to reproach. Shortly after the Princess's grand scene, he came and begged me to intercede on his behalf. I only made a sort of vague promise, and he knew well enough that, in the great world, a vague promise is the same as a refusal.

For more than six months I had to staunch the tears, and assuage the grief of Mademoiselle.

So tiresome to me did this prove, that she alone well-nigh sufficed to make me quit the Court.

Such sorrowing and chagrin made her lose the little beauty that still remained to her; nothing seemed more incongruous and ridiculous, than to hear this elderly grand lady talking perpetually about "her dearest darling, the prisoner."

At the time I write, he is at Pignerol; his bad disposition is for ever getting him into trouble. She sends him lots of money *unknown to the King*, who generally knows everything. All this money he squanders or gambles away, and when funds are low, says, "the old lady will send us some."

CHAPTER XXXVI

HYDE, THE CHANCELLOR—MISFORTUNE NOT ALWAYS MISFORTUNE—PRINCE COMNENUS—THE KING AT PETIT-BOURG—HIS *INCOGNITO*—WHO M. DE VIVONNE REALLY WAS.

THE castle of Petit-Bourg, of which the King made me a present, is situate on a height overlooking the Seine, whence one may get the loveliest of views. So pleasant did I find this charming abode, that I repaired thither as often as possible, and stayed for five or six days. One balmy summer night, I sat in my dressing-gown at the central balcony watching the stars, as was my wont, asking myself whether I should not be a thousand times happier if I passed my life in a retreat like this, and so have time to contemplate the glorious works of Nature, and to prepare myself for *that separation* which sooner or later awaited me. Reason bade me encourage such thoughts, yet my heart offered

opposition thereto, urging that there was something terrifying in solitude, most of all here, amid vast fields and meadows, and that, away from the Court and all my friends, I should grow old, and death would take me before my time. While plunged in such thoughts, I suddenly heard the sound of a tocsin, and, scanning the horizon, I saw flames and smoke rising from some hamlet or country-house. I rang for my servants, and told them instantly to despatch horsemen to the scene of the catastrophe, and bring back news.

The messengers started off, and soon came back to say that the fire had broken out at the residence of my lord Hyde, Chancellor of England, who was but lately convalescent. They had seen him lying upon a rug on the grass, some little distance from the burning mansion. I forthwith ordered my carriage to be sent for him, and charged my surgeon and secretary to invite him to take shelter at my castle.

My lord gratefully accepted the invitation; he entered my room as the clock struck twelve. As yet he could not tell the cause of the disaster, and in a calm, patriarchal manner, observed, "I am a

man marked out for great misfortune. God forbid, madam, that the mischance which dogs my footsteps touch you also!"

"I cannot bear to see a fire," said I, in reply to the English nobleman, "for some dreadful accident always results therefrom. Yet on the whole, they are of good augury, and I am sure, my lord, that your health or your affairs will benefit by this accident."

Hearing me talk thus, my lord smiled. He only took some slight refreshment—a little soup—and heard me give orders for all my available servants to be sent to the scene of the disaster, in order to save all his furniture and protect it as well.

After repeated expressions of his gratitude, he desired to withdraw and retired to rest. Next day we learnt that the fire had been got under about one o'clock in the morning; one wing only of the château had been destroyed, and the library, together with all the linen and plate, was well-nigh intact. Lord Hyde was very glad to hear the news. They told him that all the labourers living near had gladly come to the help of his servants and mine. As his private cash-box had

been saved, owing to their vigilance and honesty, he promised to distribute its contents among them when he returned.

Hardly had he got the words out, when they came to tell me that, on the high-road, just in front of my gates, a carriage, bound for Paris, had the traces broken, and the travellers—persons of distinction—begged the favour of my hospitality for a short while. I consented with pleasure, and they went back to take the travellers my answer.

"You see, madam," said the Chancellor, "my bad luck is contagious; hardly have I set foot in this enchanting abode than its atmosphere deteriorates. A travelling-carriage passes rapidly by in front of the gates, when lo! some invisible hand breaks it to pieces and stops it from proceeding any further."

Then I replied: "But how do you know, sir, that this mishap may not prove a most agreeable adventure for the travellers to whom we are about to give shelter? To begin with, they will have the honour of making your acquaintance, and to meet with an illustrious person is no common or frivolous event."

The servants announced the Princes Comnenus, who immediately entered the *salon*. Though dressed in travelling-costume, with embroidered gaiters in the Greek fashion, it was easy to see what they were. The son, a lad of fourteen, was presented to me by his father, and when both were seated, I introduced them to the Chancellor.

"The name is well-known," observed the Prince, "even in Greece. My lord married his daughter to the heir-presumptive to the English throne, and England, being by nature ungrateful, has distressed this worthy parent, while robbing him of all his possessions."

At these words Lord Hyde became greatly affected; he could not restrain his tears, and, fearing at first to compromise himself, he told us that his exile was voluntary and self-imposed, *or very nearly so.*

After complimenting the Chancellor of a great kingdom, Prince Comnenus thought that he ought to say something courteous and flattering to myself.

"Madam," quoth he, "it is only now, after asking for hospitality and generously obtaining it,

that I and my son have learnt the name of the lady who has so graciously granted us admission to this most lovely place. For a moment we hesitated in awe. But now our eyes behold her whom all Europe admires, whom a great King favours with his friendship and confidence. What strange chances befall one in life! Could I ever have foreseen so fortunate a mishap!"

I briefly replied to this amiable speech, and invited the travellers to spend, at least, one day with us. They gladly accepted, and each retired to his apartment until the time came for driving out. Dinner was laid, and on the point of being served, when the King, who was on his way from Fontainebleau, suddenly entered my room. He had heard something about a fire, and came to see what had happened. I at once informed him, telling him, moreover, that I had the Duke of York's father-in-law staying with me at the moment.

"Lord Hyde, the Chancellor?" exclaimed the King. "I have never seen him, and have always been desirous to make his acquaintance. The opportunity is an easy and favourable one."

"But that is not all, Sire; I have other guests to meet you," said I.

"And who may they be?" enquired the King, smiling. "Just because I have come in rough-and-ready plight, your house is full of people."

"But they are in rough-and-ready plight as well," I answered; "so Your Majesties must mutually excuse each other."

"Are you in fun or in earnest?" asked His Majesty. "Have you really got some King stowed away in one of your rooms?"

"Not a King, Sire, but an Emperor—the Emperor of Constantinople and Trebizond, accompanied by the Prince Imperial, his son. You shall see two Greek profiles of the best sort, two finely-cut noses, albeit hooked, and almond-shaped eyes, like those of Achilles and Agamemnon."

Then the King said: "Send for your groom-of-the-chambers at once, and tell him to give orders that my *incognito* be strictly observed. You must introduce me to these dignitaries as your brother, M. de Vivonne. Under these conditions, I will join your party at table; otherwise, I should be obliged to leave the castle immediately."

The King's wishes were promptly complied with; the footmen were let into the secret; and I introduced "Monsieur de Vivonne" to my guests.

The talk, without being sparkling, was pleasant enough until dessert. When the men-servants left us, it assumed a very different character. The King induced the Chancellor to converse, and asked him if his exile were owing to the English Monarch personally, or to some parliamentary intrigue.

"King Charles," replied his lordship, "is a Prince to gauge whose character requires long study. Apparently, he is the very soul of candour, but no one is more deceitful than he. He fawns and smiles upon you, when in his heart of hearts he despises and loathes you. When the Duke of York, unfortunately, became violently enamoured of my daughter, he did not conceal his attachment from his brother, the King, and, at last, asked for his approval to join his fortunes to my daughter's, when the King, without offering opposition, contented himself by pointing out the relative distance between their rank and position; to which the

Duke replied: 'But at one time you did everything you possibly could to get Olympia Mancini, who was merely Mazarin's niece!' And King Charles, who could not deny this, left his brother complete liberty of action.

"As my daughter was far dearer and more precious to me than social grandeur, I begged the Duke of York to find for himself a partner of exalted rank. He gave way to despair, and spoke of putting an end to his existence; in fact, he behaved as all lovers do whom passion touches to madness; so this baleful marriage took place. God is my witness that I opposed it, urged thereto by wisdom, by modesty and by foresight. Now, as you see, from that cruel moment I have been exiled to alien lands, robbed of the sight of my beloved child, who has been raised to the rank of a Princess, and whom I shall never see again. Why did my Sovereign not say to me frankly: 'I do not like this marriage; you must oppose it, Chancellor, to please me.'

"How different was his conduct from that of his cousin, the French King! Mademoiselle d'Orleans wanted to make an unsuitable match;

the King opposed it, as he had a right to do, and the marriage did not take place."

My "brother," the King, smiled as he told his lordship he was right.

Prince Comnenus was of the same opinion, and, being expressly invited to do so, he briefly recounted his adventures, and stated the object of his journey to Paris.

"The whole world," said he, "is aware of the great misfortunes of my family. The Emperors Andronicus and Michael Comnenus, driven from the throne of Constantinople, left their names within the heart and memory of Greece; they had ruled the West with a gentle sceptre, and in a people's grateful remembrance they had their reward. My ancestors, their descendants, held sway in Trebizond, a quicksand which gave way beneath their tread. From adversity to adversity, from country to country, we were finally driven to seclusion in the Isle of Candia, part of the quondam Minos territory. Venice had allowed Candia to fall before Mahomet's bloody sword. Europe lost her bulwark, the Cross of the Saviour was thrown down, and the Candian Christians have been massacred

or forced to flee. I have left in the hands of the conqueror my fields and forests, my summer palace, my winter palace, and my gardens filled with the produce of America, Asia and Europe. From this overwhelming disaster I managed to save my son; and, as my sole fortune, I brought away with me the large jewels of Andronicus, his ivory and sapphire sceptre, his scimitar of Lemnos, and his ancient gold crown, which once encircled Theseus' brow.

"These noble relics I shall present to the King of France. They say that he is humane, generous, fond of glory and zealous in the cause of justice. When before his now immovable throne he sees laid down these last relics of an ancient race, perhaps he will be touched by so lamentable a downfall, and will not suffer distress to trouble my last days, and darken the early years of this my child."

During this speech I kept watching the King's face. I saw that he was interested, then touched, and, at last, was on the point of forgetting his *incognito* and of appearing in his true character.

"Prince," said he to the Greek traveller,

" my duties and my devotion make it easy for me to approach the King of France's person very closely. In four or five days he will be leaving Fontainebleau for his palace at Saint-Germain. I will tell him, without modification, all that I have just heard from you. Without being either prophet or seer, I can guarantee that you will be well received and cordially welcomed, receiving such benefits as Kings are bound to yield to Kings.

" Madame, who respects, and is interested in you, is desirous, I feel certain, for me to persuade you to stay here until her departure; she enjoys royal favour, and it is my sister herself who shall present you at Court. You shall show her, you shall show us all, the golden crown of Theseus, the sceptre of Andronicus, and this brow which I gaze upon and revere, for it deserves a kingly diadem.

"As for you, my lord," said His Majesty to the English nobleman, "if the misfortune of last night prove disastrous in more ways than one, pray wait for a while before you go back to the smouldering ashes of a half-extinguished fire. My sister takes pleasure in your company; indeed,

the Marquise is charmed to be able to entertain three such distinguished guests, and begs to place her château at your disposal until such time as your own shall be restored. We shall speak of you to the King, and he will certainly endeavour to induce King Charles, his cousin, to recall you to your native country."

Then, after saying one or two words to me in private, he bowed to the gentlemen and withdrew. We went out on to the balcony to see him get into his coach, when, to the surprise and astonishment of my guests, as the carriage passed along the avenue, about a hundred peasants, grouped near the gateway, threw off their hats and cried, "Long live the King!"

Prince Comnenus and his son were inconsolable; I excused myself by saying that it was at the express desire of our royal visitor, and my lord admitted that, at last, he recollected his features and recognised him by his grand and courtly address.

Before I end my tale, do not let me forget to say that the King strongly recommended Prince Comnenus to the Republic of Genoa, and obtained

for him considerable property in Corsica and a handsome residence at Ajaccio. He accepted five or six beautiful jewels that had belonged to Andronicus, and caused the sum of twelve hundred thousand francs to be paid to the young Comnenus from his treasury.

CHAPTER XXXVII

THE UNIVERSAL JUBILEE — COURT PREACHERS — KING DAVID—MADAME DE MONTESPAN IS OBLIGED TO GO TO CLAGNY — BOSSUET'S MISSION — MADEMOISELLE DE MAULÉON—AN ENEMY'S GOOD FAITH.

I DO not desire to hold up to ridicule the rites of that religion in which I was born and bred. Neither would I disparage its ancient usages, nor its far more modern laws. All religions, as I know, have their peculiarities, all nations their contradictions, but I must be suffered to complain of the abuse sometimes made in our country of clerical and priestly authority.

A general Jubilee was held soon after the birth of my second son, and among Christian nations like ours, a Jubilee is as if one said: "Now all statutes, divine and earthly, are repealed by means of certain formula recited, certain visits paid to the temples, certain acts of abstinence practised here

and there, all sins, misdemeanours and crimes are forgiven, and their punishment cancelled." It is generally on the occasion of the proclamation of a new Pontificate at Rome that such great Papal absolutions are extended over the whole universe.

The Jubilee having been proclaimed in Paris, the Court preachers worked miracles. They denounced all social irregularities and friendship of which the Church disapproved. The opening sermon showed plainly that the orator's eloquence was pointed at myself. The second preacher showed even less restraint; he almost mentioned me by name. The third ecclesiastic went beyond all bounds actually uttering the following words:

"Sire, when King David was still but a shepherd, a heifer was stolen from his flocks; David made complaint to the patriarch of the land, when his heifer was restored to him, and the thief was punished.

"When David came to the throne, he carried off his servant's wife, and as excuse for such an odious deed, he pleaded the young woman's extreme beauty. The wretched servant besought him to obey the voice not of passion, but of justice, and

the servant was disgraced and perished miserably. Oh, David, unhappy David!"

The King who had found it hard to sit quiet and hear such insults, said to me that evening:

"Go to Clagny. Let this stormy weather pass by. When it is fine again, you must come back."

Having never run counter to the wishes of the father of my children, I acquiesced, and without further delay gladly departed.

Next day, Madame de Montausier came to see me at my country house; she told me of the general rumour that was afloat at Court. The news, said she, of *my retirement* had begun to get about; three bishops had gone to congratulate the King, and these gentlemen had despatched couriers to Paris to inform the heads of the various parishes, inviting them to write to the Prince sympathising references touching an event which God and all Christendom viewed with complete satisfaction.

Madame de Montausier assured me that the King's bearing was fairly calm on the whole, and she also added that he had granted an interview of half-an-hour at least to the Abbé Bossuet, who

had discoursed to him about me, in a strain similar to that of the other clerics.

She was my sincere friend; she promised to come to Clagny every evening, driving thither *incognito*.

She had hardly been gone an hour, when my footman announced "Monsieur Bossuet, Bishop of Condom."

At the mention of this name, I felt momentarily inclined to refuse to see its owner; but I conquered my disgust, and I did well. The prelate, with his semi-clerical, semi-courtly air, made me a low bow. I calmly waited, so as to give him time to deliver his message. The famous rhetorician proceeded as follows:—

"You know, madam, with what health-giving sacrifices the Church is now engaged. The merits of Our Lord doubtless protect Christians at all times, but the Church has appointed times more efficacious, ceremonies more useful, springs yet more abounding. Thus it is that we now celebrate the Grand Nine Days of the Jubilee.

"To this mystic pool herdsmen and monarchs alike receive summons and admission. The most

Christian king must, for his own sake, accomplish his own sanctification; his sanctification provides for that of his subjects.

"Chosen by God to this royal priesthood, he comprehends the duties imposed upon him by such noble office. The passions of the heart are maladies from which man may recover, just as he recovers from physical disease. The physicians of the soul have lifted up their voice, have taken sage counsel together; and I come to inform you of the Monarch's miraculous recovery, and, at his request, I bring you this important and welcome news.

"For *convalescents* greater care is required than for others; the King, and the whole of France, beseech you, with my voice, to have respect and care for the *convalescence* of our Monarch, and I beg you, madam, to leave at once for Fontevrault."

"For Fontevrault?" I cried, without betraying my emotion. "Fontevrault is near Poitiers; it is too far away. No, I would rather go to Petit-Bourg, near the forest of Fontainebleau."

"Fontainebleau is but eighteen leagues from

the capital," he answered; "such proximity would be dangerous. I must insist upon Fontevrault, madam."

"But I cannot take my children to Fontevrault," I retorted; "the nuns, and the Abbess herself, would never admit them. You know better than I do that it is a nunnery."

"Your children," said he, "are not necessary to you; Madame de la Vallière managed to leave hers for good and all."

"Yes; and in forsaking them she committed a crime," I answered; "only ferocious-hearted persons could have counselled her or commanded her to do so." And, saying this, I rose, and gave him a glance of disdain.

He grew somewhat gentler in manner as he slowly went on: "His Majesty will take care of your children; it behoves you *to save* their mother. And, in order to prove to you that I have not come here of my own accord, but that, on the contrary, I am executing a formal command, here is a letter of farewell addressed to you by the King."

I took the letter, which was couched in the following terms:

"It is but right, madam, that, on so solemn an occasion, I should set an example myself. I must ask you henceforth to consider our intimacy entirely at an end. You must retire to Fontevrault, where Madame de Mortemart will take care of you and afford you distraction by her charming society. Your children are in good hands; do not be in the least uneasy about them. Farewell. I wish you all the firmness and well-being possible.

"LOUISON."

In the first flush of my indignation I was about to trample under foot so offensive a communication. But the final phrase shocked me less than the others. I read it over again, and understood that if the King recommended me to be firm, it was because he needed to be firm himself. I soon mastered my emotion, and looked at things in their real light. It was easy to see that sanctimonious fanatics had forced the King to act. Bossuet was not sanctimonious, but, to serve his own ends, proffered himself as spokesman and emissary, being anxious to prove to his old colleagues that he was on the side of what they styled *moral conduct and good example.*

For a while I walked up and down my *salon;* but the least exertion fatigues me. I resumed my

arm-chair or my settee, leaving the man there like a sort of messenger, whom it was not necessary to treat with any respect. He was bold, and asked me for a definite answer which he could take back to His Majesty. I stared hard at him for about a minute, and then said: "My Lord Bishop of Condom, the clerics who have been advising the King are very pleased that he should set an example to his people of self-sacrifice. I am of their opinion; I think as they do, as you do, as the Pope does; but, feeling convinced that to us, the innocent sheep, the shepherds ought first to show an example, I will consent to break off my relationship with His Majesty when you, M. de Condom, shall have broken off your intimacy *with Mademoiselle de Mauléon des Vieux!*"

By a retort of this kind I admit that I hoped greatly to embarrass the Bishop, and enjoy seeing his face redden with confusion. But he was nowise disconcerted, and I confess to-day that this circumstance proved to me that there was but little truth in the rumours that were current with regard to this subject.

"Mademoiselle de Mauléon!" said he, smiling

half-bitterly, half-pityingly. "Surely, madam, your grief makes you forget what you say. Everybody knows that she is an acquaintance of my youth, and that, since that time, having confidence in my doctrines and my counsel, she wished to have me as spiritual monitor and guide. How can you institute a comparison between such a relationship and your own?" Then, after walking up and down for a moment, as if endeavouring to regain his self-possession, he continued:

"However, I shall not insist further; it was signally foolish of me to speak in the name of an earthly King, when I should have invoked that of the King of Heaven. I have received an insulting answer. So be it.

"Farewell, madam, I leave you to your own conscience, which, seemingly, is so tranquil that I blame myself for having sought to disturb it."

With these words he departed, leaving me much amazed at the patience with which a man, known to be so arrogant and haughty, had received such an onslaught upon his private life and reputation.

I need scarcely say that, next day, the species

of Pastoral Letter which my lords the Bishops of Aleth, Orleans, Soissons and Condom had dictated to the King, was succeeded by another letter which he had dictated himself, and by which my love for him was solaced and assured.

He begged me to wait patiently for a few days, and this arrangement served my purpose very well. I thought it most amusing that the King should have commissioned M. de Bossuet to deliver this second missive, and I believe I said as much to certain persons, which perhaps gave rise to a rumour that he actually brought me love-letters from the King. But the purveyors of such gossip could surely know nothing of Bossuet's inflexible principles, and of the subtlety of his policy. He was well aware that by lending himself to such amenities he would lose caste, morally, with the King, and that if by his loyalty he had won royal attachment and regard, all this would have been irretrievably lost. Thus, M. de Bossuet was of those who say: "Hate me; but fear me," rather than of those who strive to be loved; such people know that friendships are generally frail and transient, and that esteem lasts longer and leads

further. He never interfered again with my affairs, nor did I with his; I got my way; and he is still where he was.

CHAPTER XXXVIII

MADAME DE MONTESPAN BACK AT COURT—HER FRIENDS—HER ENEMIES—EDIFYING CONVERSIONS—THE ARCHBISHOP OF PARIS.

EIGHT days after the conclusion of the Jubilee I returned to Versailles. The King received me with every mark of sincere friendship; my friends came in crowds to my apartments; my enemies left their names with my Swiss servant, and in chapel they put back my seat, chairs and footstools in their usual place.

Madame de Maintenon had twice sent my children to Clagny[1] with the under-governess; but she did not come herself, which greatly inconvenienced me. I complained to her about this, and she assured me the King had dissuaded

1 The splendid Château of Clagny (since demolished) was situated on the beautiful country surrounding Versailles, near the wood of Villers d'Avrai.—EDITOR'S NOTE.

her from visiting me, "so as to put curious folk off the scent;" and when I told her of my interview with M. de Bossuet, she neatly avoided being mixed up in the matter by omitting to blame anybody. The most licentious women, so she told me, had distinguished themselves by pious exercises during the observance of the Jubilee. She informed me that the Comtesse de Soissons, the Princess de Monaco, Madame de Soubise, and five or six virtuous dames of this type, had given gold, silver and enamelled lamps to the most notable churches of the capital. The notorious Duchesse de Longueville talked of having her own tomb constructed in a Carmelite chapel. Six leaders of fashion had forsworn rouge, and Madame d'Humières had given up gambling. As for my lord the Archbishop of Paris, he had not changed his way of life a jot, either for the better or for the worse.

CHAPTER XXXIX

ATTEMPTED ABDUCTION — THE MARQUISE PROCURES A BODY-GUARD — HER REASONS FOR SO DOING — GEOGRAPHY AND MORALS.

THE youthful Marquis d'Antin—my son—was growing up; the King showed him the most flattering signs of his attachment, and as the child had only lived with me, he dreaded his father's violent temper, of which he had often heard me speak. In order to have the custody of his son, the Marquis de Montespan had appealed to Parliament; but partisans of the King had shelved the matter, which, though ever in abeyance, was still pending. I had my son educated under my care, being sure of the tender attachment that would spring up between himself and the Princes, his brothers. At the Montespan château, I admit, he would have learned to ride an unbroken horse, as well as to shoot hares, partridges and big

game; he would also have learned to talk loud, to use bad language, to babble about his pedigree, while ignorant of its history or its crest; in fine, he would have learned to despise his mother, and probably to hate her. Educated under my eyes, almost on the King's lap, he soon learned the customs of the Court and all that a well-born gentleman should know. He will be made *Duc d'Antin*—I have the King's word for it—and his mien and address, which fortunately sort well with that which Fate holds in store for him, entitle him to rank with all that is most exalted at Court.

The Procureur-Général caused a man from Béarn to be arrested who had come to abduct my son. This individual, half-Spanish and half-French, was detained in the Paris prisons, and I was left in ignorance of the matter. It was imprudent not to tell me, and almost occasioned a serious mishap.

One day, as I was returning from the neighbourhood of Étampes with only my son, his tutor and my physician in the carriage. On reaching a steep incline, where the break should be put on,

my servants imprudently neglected to do this, and I felt that we were burning the roadway in our descent. Such recklessness made me uneasy, when suddenly twelve horsemen rode headlong at us, and sought to stop the postillions. My six horses were new ones and very fresh; they galloped along at breakneck speed. Our pursuers fired at the coachman, but missed him, and the report of a pistol terrified the horses yet further. They redoubled their speed. We gave ourselves up for lost, as an accident of some sort seemed bound to ensue, when suddenly my carriage reached the courtyard of an inn, where we obtained help.

Baulked of their prey, the horsemen turned about and rode away. They had been noticed the day before hanging about and asking for Madame de Montespan.

We stayed that night at the inn, and next day, provided with a stout escort, we reached Saint-Germain.

The King regretted not having provided against similar attempts. He rewarded my postillions for their neglect to use the break (a neglect which, at first, I was going to punish), saying to me: "If

they had put the break on, you would have been captured and whisked off to the Pyrenees. Your husband is never going to give in!"

"Such a disagreeable surprise," added he, "shall not occur again. Henceforth you shall not travel without an adequate escort. In future, you shall have a guard-of-honour, like the Queen and myself." I had long wished for this privilege, and I warmly thanked His Majesty.

Nevertheless, people chose to put a completely false construction upon so simple an innovation, and my sentiments in the matter were wholly misunderstood. It was thought that vanity had prompted me to endeavour to put myself on a level with the Queen, and this worthy Princess was, herself, somewhat nettled thereat. God is my witness that, from mere motives of prudence, this unusual arrangement had to be made, and I entirely agreed to it. After all, if the Infanta of Spain gave birth to the Dauphin, Athénais de Mortemart is the mother of several Princes.

In France, a Catholic realm, for the King to have a second wife is considered superfluous by the timorous and shrivelled-brained. In Constan-

tinople, Alexandria and Isfahàn, I should only have met with homage, veneration, respect. Errors of a purely geographical nature are not those which cause me alarm; to have brought into the world so perfect a being as the Duc du Maine will never, as I take it, incur blame at the tribunal of Almighty God.

Mademoiselle de Nantes, his charming sister, has from her cradle been destined to belong to one of the royal branches. Mademoiselle de Blois will also become the mother of several Bourbon Princes; I have good grounds for cherishing such flattering hopes.

The little Comte de Toulouse already bids fair to be a worthy successor to M. du Maine. He has the same grace of manner, and frank, distinguished mien.

When all these Princes possess their several escorts, it will seem passing strange that their mother alone should not have any. That is my opinion, and it is shared by all people of sense.

CHAPTER XL

OSMIN, THE LITTLE MOOR—HE SETS THE FASHION—THE QUEEN HAS A BLACK BABY—OSMIN IS DISMISSED.

I HAVE already told how the envoys of the King of Arda, an African Prince, gave to the Queen a nice little blackamoor, as a toy and pet. This Moor, aged about ten or twelve years, was only twenty-seven inches in height, and the King of Arda declared that, being quite unique, the boy would never grow to be taller than three feet.

The Queen instantly took a great fancy to this black creature. Sometimes he gambolled about and turned somersaults on her carpet like a kitten, or frolicked about on the bureau, the sofa, and even on the Queen's lap.

As she passed from one room to another, he used to hold up her train, and delighted to catch hold of it and so make the Queen stop short

suddenly, or else to cover his head and face with it, for mischief, to make the courtiers laugh.

He was arrayed in regular African costume, wearing handsome bracelets, armlets, a necklace ablaze with jewels, and a splendid turban. Wishing to show myself agreeable, I gave him a superb aigrette of rubies and diamonds; I was always sorry afterwards that ever I did so.

The King could never put up with this little dwarf, albeit his features were comely enough. To begin with, he thought him too familiar, and never even answered him when the dwarf dared to address him.

Following the fashion set by Her Majesty, all the Court ladies wanted to have little blackamoors to follow them about, set off their white complexions, and hold up their cloaks or their trains. Thus it came that Mignard, Le Bourdon, and other painters of the aristocracy, used to introduce negro boys into all their large portraits. It was a mode, a mania; but so absurd a fashion soon had to disappear after the mishap of which I am about to tell.

The Queen being pregnant, public prayers were

offered up for her according to custom, and Her Majesty was for ever saying: "My pregnancy this time is different from preceding ones. I am a prey to nausea and strange whims; I have never felt like this before. If, for propriety's sake, I did not restrain myself, I should now dearly like to be turning somersaults on the carpet, like little Osmin. He eats green fruit and raw game; that is what I should like to do, too. I should like to——"

"Oh, madam, you frighten us!" exclaimed the King. "Don't let all those whimsies trouble you further, or you will give birth to some monstrosity, some freak of nature." His Majesty was a true prophet. The Queen was delivered of a fine little girl, black as ink from head to foot. They never told her this at once, fearing a catastrophe, but persuaded her to go to sleep, saying that the child had been taken away to be christened.

The physicians met in one room, the bishops and chaplains in another. One prelate was opposed to baptising the infant; another only agreed to this upon certain conditions. The

majority decided that it should be baptised without the name of father or mother, and such suppression was unanimously advocated.

The little thing, despite its swarthy hue, was most beautifully made; its features bore none of those marks peculiar to people of colour.

It was sent away to the Gisors district to be suckled *as a negro's daughter*, and the *Gazette de France* contained an announcement to the effect that the royal infant had died, after having been baptised by the chaplains.[1]

The little African was sent away, as may well be imagined; and the Queen admitted that, one day, soon after she was pregnant, he had hidden himself behind a piece of furniture and suddenly jumped out upon her to give her a fright. In this he was but too successful.

The Court ladies no longer dared come near the Queen attended by their little blackamoors. These, however, they kept for a while longer, as

1 This daughter of the Queen lived, and was obliged to enter a Benedictine nunnery at Moret. Her portrait is to be seen in the Sainte-Geneviève Library of Henry IV.'s College, where it hangs in the winter saloon.—EDITOR'S NOTE.

if they were mere nick-nacks or ornaments; in Paris they were still to be seen in public. But the ladies' husbands at last got wind of the tale, when all the little negroes disappeared.

CHAPTER XLI

MONSIEUR'S SECOND MARRIAGE — PRINCESS PALATINE — THE COURT TURNSPIT — A WOMAN'S HATRED — THE KING'S MISTRESS ON A PAR WITH THE FIRST PRINCE OF THE BLOOD — SHE GIVES HIS WIFE A LESSON.

In order to keep up appearances at his Palais-Royal, Monsieur besought the King to consent to his re-marriage after the usual term of mourning was at an end.

"Whom have you in view?" asked his brother. He replied that he proposed to wed Mademoiselle — the *grand Mademoiselle de Montpensier* — on account of her enormous wealth!

Just then Mademoiselle was head-over-ears in love with Lauzun. She sent the Prince about his business, as, I believe, I have already stated. Moreover, she remarked: "You had the loveliest wife in all Europe — young, charming, a veritable picture. You might have seen to it that she was not poisoned; in that case you would not now be

a widower. As it is not likely that I should ever come to terms with your favourites, I shall never be anything else to you but a cousin, and I shall endeavour not to die until the proper time; that is, when it shall please God to take me. You can repeat this speech, word for word, to your precious Marquis d'Effiat and Messieurs de Rémecourt and de Lorraine. They have no access to my kitchens; I am not afraid of them."

This answer amused the King not a little, and he said to me: "I was told that the Palatine of Bavaria's daughter is extremely ugly and ill-bred; consequently, she is capable of keeping Monsieur in check. Through one of my Rhenish allies, I will make proposals to her father for her hand. As soon as a reply comes, I will show my brother a portrait of some sort; it will be all the same to him; he will accept her."

Soon afterwards this marriage took place. Charlotte Elizabeth of Bavaria, though aware of the sort of death that her predecessor died, agreed to marry Monsieur. Had she not been lucky enough to make this grand match, her extreme ugliness would assuredly have doomed her to

celibacy, even in Bavaria and in Germany. It is surely not allowable to come into the world with such a face and form, such a voice, such eyes, such hands, and such feet, as this singular Princess displayed. The Court, still mindful of the sweetness, grace and charm of Henrietta of England, could not contemplate without horror and disgust the fearful caricature I have just described. Young pregnant women — after the Queen's unfortunate experience — were afraid to look at the Princess Palatine, and wished to be confined before they re-appeared at Court.

As for herself, armed with robust, philosophical notions, and a complete set of Northern nerves, she was in no way disconcerted at the effect her presence produced. She even had the good sense to appear indifferent to all the raillery she provoked, and said to the King:

"Sire, to my mind you are one of the handsomest men in the world, and, with few exceptions, your Court appears to me perfectly fitted for you. I have come but scantily equipped to such an assemblage. Fortunately, I am neither jealous nor a coquette, and I shall win pardon for my

plainness, I myself being the first to make merry at it."

"You put us completely at our ease," replied the King, who had not even the courage to be gallant. "I must thank you on behalf of these ladies for your candour and wit." Ten or twelve of us began to titter at this speech of hers. The *Robust Lady* never forgave those who laughed.

Directly she arrived, she singled me out as the object of her ponderous Palatine sarcasms. She exaggerated my style of dress, my ways and habits. She thought to make fun of my little spaniels by causing herself to be followed, even into the King's presence-chamber, by a large turnspit, which in mockery she called by the name of my favourite dog.

When I had had my hair dressed, ornamented with quantities of little curls, diamonds, and jewelled pins, she had the impertinence to appear at Court wearing a huge wig, a grotesque travesty of my coiffure. I was told of it. I entered the King's apartment without deigning to salute Madame, or even to look at her.

I had also been told that, in society, she re-

ferred to me as "the Montespan woman." I met her one day in company with a good many other people, and said to her:

"Madam, you managed to give up your religion in order to marry a French Prince, you might just as well have left behind your gross Palatine vulgarity as well. I have the honour to inform you that, in the exalted society to which you have been admitted, one can no more say, "the Montespan woman," than one can say "the Orleans woman." I have never offended you in the slightest degree, and I fail to see why I should have been chosen as the favoured object of your vulgar insults."

She blushed, and ventured to inform me that this way of expressing herself was a turn of speech taken from her own native language, and that by saying "the," as a matter of course "Marquise" was understood.

"No, madam," I said, without appearing irritated; "in Paris, such an excuse as that is quite inadmissible; and, since you associate with turnspits, pray ask your cooks, and they will tell you."

Fearing to quarrel with the King, she was obliged to be more careful, but to change one's disposition is impossible, and she has loathed and insulted me ever since. Her husband, who himself probably taught her to do so, one day tried to make apologies for what he ruefully termed her reprehensible conduct. "There, there, it doesn't matter," I said to him, "it is easier to offend me than to deceive me. Allow me to quote to you the speech of Mademoiselle de Montpensier: 'You had a charming and accomplished wife, you ought to have prevented her from being poisoned, and then we should not have had this hag at Court.'"

CHAPTER XLII

MADAME DE MONTESPAN'S FATHER-CONFESSOR — HE ALTERS HIS OPINION — MADAME DE MAINTENON IS CONSULTED—A GENERAL ON THEOLOGY—A COUNTRY PRIEST—THE MARQUISE POSTPONES HER REPENTANCE AND HER ABSOLUTION.

My father-confessor, who, since my arrival at Court, had never vexed or thwarted me, suddenly altered his whole manner towards me, from which I readily concluded that the Queen had got hold of him. This priest, of gentle, easy-going, kindly nature, never spoke to me except in a tone of discontent and reproach. He sought to induce me to leave the King there and then, and retire to some remote château. Seeing that he was intriguing, and had, so to speak, taken up his position, like a woman of experience I took up mine as well, and politely dismissed him, at which he

was somewhat surprised. In matters of religion, Madame de Maintenon, who understands such things, was my usual mentor. I told her that I was disheartened, and should not go to confession again for ever so long. She was shocked at my resolve, and strove all she could to make me change my mind and endeavour to lead me back into the right way.

She for ever kept repeating her favourite argument, saying: "Good gracious! suppose you should die in that state!"

I replied that it was not my fault, as I had never ceased to obey the precepts of the Holy Church. "It was my old father-confessor," said I, "the Canon of Saint Thomas-du-Louvre, who had harshly refused to confess me."

"What he does," replied she, "is solely for your own good."

"But if he has only my well-being in view," I quickly retorted, "why did not he think of this at first? It would have been far better to have stopped me at the outset, instead of letting me calmly proceed upon my career. He is obeying the Queen's orders or else those of that Abbé

Bossuet *de Maulèon*, who no longer dares attack me to my face."

As we thus talked, the Duc de Vivonne came into my room. Learning the topic of our discussion, he spoke as follows: "I should not be general of the King's Galleys and a soldier at heart and by profession if my opinion in this matter were other than it is. I have attentively read controversies on this point, and have seen it conclusively proved that our Kings never kept a confessor at Court. Among these Kings, too, there were most holy, most saintly people, and——"

"Then, what do you conclude from that, Duke?" asked Madame de Maintenon.

"Why, that Madame will do well to respect His Majesty the King as her father-confessor."

"Oh, Duke, you shock me! What dreadful advice, to be sure!" cried the governess.

"I have not the least wish to shock you, madam; yet my veneration for d'Aubigné[1]—your illustrious grandfather—is too great to let me

1 Theodore Agrippa, Baron d'Aubigné, Lieutenant-general in the army of Henry IV. He persevered in Calvinism after the recantation of the King.—EDITOR'S NOTE.

think that he is among the damned, and he never attended confession at all."

"Eternity hides that secret from us," replied Madame de Maintenon. "Each day I pray to God to have mercy upon my poor grandfather; if I thought he were among the saved, I should never be at pains to do this."

"Bah, madam! let's talk like sensible, straightforward people," quoth the General. "The reverend Father de la Chaise — one of the Jesuit oracles—gives the King absolution every year, and authorises him to receive the Holy Sacrament at Easter. If the King's confessor — thorough priest as he is — pardons his intimacy with Madame, here, how comes it that the other cleric won't tolerate Madame's intimacy with the King? On a point of such importance as this, the two confessors ought really to come to some agreement, or else, as the Jesuits have such a tremendous reputation, the Marquise is entitled to side with them."

Hemmed in thus, Madame de Maintenon remarked "that the morals of Jesuits and lax casuists had never been hers," and she advised

me to choose a confessor far removed from the Court and its intrigues.

The next day she mentioned a certain village priest to me, uninfluenced by anybody, and whose primitive simplicity caused him to be looked upon as a saint.

I submitted, and ingenuously went to confess myself to this wonderful man; his *great goodness* did not prevent him from rallying me about the elegance of my costume, and the perfume of my gloves, and my hair. He insisted upon knowing my name, and, on learning it, flew into a passion. I suppress the details of his disagreeable propositions. Seated sideways in his confessional, he stamped on the floor, abused me, and spoke disrespectfully of the King. I could not stand such scandalous behaviour for long, and, wearing my veil down, I got into my coach, being thoroughly determined that I would take a good long holiday. M. de Vivonne soundly rated me for such *cowardice*, as he called it, while Madame de Maintenon offered me her curate-in-chief, or else the Abbé Gobelin.

But, for the time being, I determined to keep to my plan of not going to confession, strengthened

in such resolve by my brother Vivonne's good sense, and the attitude of the King's Jesuit confessor, who had a great reputation and knew what he was about.

CHAPTER XLIII

THE COMTE DE GUICHE — HIS VIOLENT PASSION FOR MADAME — HIS DESPAIR — HE FLEES TO LA TRAPPE — AND COMES OUT AGAIN — A MAN'S HEART — CURED OF HIS PASSION, HE TAKES A WIFE.

THE Comte de Guiche, son of the Marshal de Grammont, was undoubtedly one of the handsomest men in France.

The grandeur and wealth of his family had, at an early age, inspired him with courage and self-conceit, so that in his blind, frivolous presumption, the only person, as he thought, who exceeded his own fascination was possibly the King, but nobody else.

Perceiving the wonderful charm of Monsieur's first wife, he conceived so violent a passion for her, that no counsel nor restraint could prevent him from going to the most extravagant lengths in obedience to this rash, this boundless passion.

Henrietta of England, much neglected by her husband, and naturally of a romantic disposition, allowed the young Count to declare his love for her, either by singing pretty romances under her balcony, or by wearing ribbons, bunched together in the form of a hieroglyphic, next his heart. Elegantly dressed, he never failed to attend all the assemblies to which she lent lustre by her presence. He followed her to Saint-Germain, to Versailles, to Chambord, to Saint-Cloud; he only lived and had his being in the enjoyment of contemplating her charms.

One day, being desirous of walking alongside her sedan-chair, without being recognised, he had a complete suit made for him of the la Vallière livery, and thus, seeming to be one of the Duchess's pages, he was able to converse with Madame for a short time. Another time he disguised himself as a pretty gipsy, and came to tell the Princess her fortune. At first she did not recognise him, but when the secret was out, and all the ladies were in fits of laughter, a page came running in to announce the arrival of Monsieur. Young de Guiche slipped out by a back staircase, and in

order to facilitate his exit, one of the footmen, worthy of Molière, caught hold of the Prince as if he were one of his comrades, and, holding a handkerchief over his face, nearly poked his eye out.

The Count's indiscretions were retailed in due course to Monsieur by his favourites, and he was incensed beyond measure. He complained to Marshal de Grammont; he complained to the King. Hereupon, M. de Guiche received orders to travel for two or three years.

War with the Turks had just been declared, and, together with other officers, his friends, he set out for Candia and took part in the siege. All did him the justice to affirm that while there he behaved like a hero. When the fortress had to capitulate, and Candia was lost to the Christians for ever, our officers returned to France. Madame was still alive when the young Count rejoined his family. He met the Princess once or twice in society, without being able to approach her person, or say a single word to her.

Soon afterwards, she gave birth to a daughter. A few days later, certain monsters took her life by giving her poison. This dreadful event made such

an impression upon the poor Comte de Guiche, that for a long while he lost his gaiety, youth, good looks, and, to a certain extent, his reason. After yielding to violent despair, he was possessed with rash ideas of vengeance. The Marshal de Grammont had to send him away to one of his estates, for the Count talked of attacking and of killing, without further ado, the Marquis d'Effiat, M. de Rémecourt, the Prince's *intendant*, named Morel,[1] and even the Duc d'Orléans himself.

His intense agitation was succeeded by profound melancholy, stupor closely allied to insanity or death.

One evening, the Comte de Guiche went to the Abbey Church of Saint-Denis. He hid himself here, to avoid being watched, and when the huge nave was closed, and all the attendants had left, he rushed forward and flung himself at full length upon the tombstone which covers the vast royal vault. By the flickering light of the lamps, he mourned the passing hence of so accomplished a

1 Morel subsequently admitted his guilt in the matter of Madame's death, as well as the commission of other corresponding crimes. See the Letters of Charlotte, the Princess Palatine.—EDITOR'S NOTE.

woman, murdered in the flower of her youth. He called her by name, telling her once more of his deep and fervent love. Next day, he wandered about in great pain, gloomy and inconsolable.

One day he came to see me at Clagny, and talked in a hopeless, desolate way about *our dear one*. He told me that neither glory nor ambition nor voluptuous pleasures could ever allure him or prove soothing to his soul. He assured me that life was a burden to him—a burden that religion alone prevented him from relinquishing, and that he was determined to shut himself up in La Trappe or in some such wild, deserted place.

I sought to dissuade him from such a project, which could only be the cause of grief and consternation to his relatives. He pretended to yield to my entreaties, but the next night he left home and disappeared.

At length he came back. Luckily, the Trappiste Abbé de Rancé wished to take away from him the portrait on enamel of Henrietta of England, so as to break it in pieces before his eyes. So indignant was the Count that he was upon the point of giving the hermit a thrashing.

He fled in disgust from the monastery, and this fresh annoyance served, in some degree, to assuage his grief. Life's daily occupations, the excitements of society, the continual care shown towards him by his relatives, Youth above all, and Time, the irresistible healer, at last served to soothe a sorrow which, had it lasted longer, would have been more disastrous in its results.

The Comte de Guiche consented to marry a wife to whom he was but slightly attached, and who is quite content with him, praising his good qualities and all his actions.

CHAPTER XLIV

MEXICO—PHILIPPA—MOLINA—THE QUEEN'S JESTER.

In marrying Marie Thérèse, Infanta of Spain, the King had made an advantageous match from a political point of view. For, through the Infanta, he had rights with regard to Flanders; she also provided him with eventual claims upon Spain itself, together with Mexico and Peru. But from a personal and social point of view, the King could not have contracted a more miserable alliance. The Infanta, almost wholly uneducated, had not even such intellectual resources as a position such as hers certainly required, where personal risk was perpetual, where authority had to be maintained by charming manners, and respect for power ensured by elevation of tone and sentiment, which checks the indiscreet, and imbues everybody with the spirit of consideration and reverence.

Marie Thérèse, though a King's daughter, made no more effect at Court than if she had been a mere middle-class person. The King, in fact, by his considerateness, splendour and glory, served to support her dignity. He hoped, and even desired, that she should be held in honour, partly for her own sake, in a great measure for his. But as soon as she started upon some argument or narration where force of intellect was needed, she always seemed bewildered, and he soon interrupted her either by finishing the tale himself, or by changing the conversation. This he did good-naturedly, and with much tact, so that the Queen, instead of taking offence, was pleased to be under such an obligation to him. From such a wife this Prince could not look to have sons of remarkable talent or intellect, for that would have been nothing short of a miracle. And thus the little Dauphin showed none of those signs of intelligence which the most ordinary common-place children usually display. When the Queen heard courtiers repeat some of the droll, witty sayings of the Comte de Vexin, or the Duc du Maine, she reddened with jealousy, and remarked: "Everybody goes into

ecstacies about those children; while Monsieur le Dauphin is never even mentioned."

She had brought with her from Spain that Donna Silvia Molina, of whom I have already spoken, and who had got complete control over her character. Instead of tranquillising her, and so making her happy, Donna Silvia thought to become more entertaining, and, above all, more necessary to her, by gossiping to her about the King's amours. She ferreted out all the secret details, all the petty circumstances, and with such dangerous material troubled the mind, and destroyed the repose, of her mistress, who wept unceasingly, and became visibly changed.

La Molina, enriched and almost wealthy, was sent back to Spain, much to the grief of Marie Thérèse, who, for several days after her departure, could neither eat nor sleep.

At the same time, the King got rid of that little she-dwarf, named Mexica, in whose insufferable talk, and insufferable presence, the Queen took delight. But the sly little wretch escaped during the journey, and managed to get back to the Princess again, hidden in some box or basket.

The Queen was highly delighted to see her again; she pampered her secretly in her private cabinet, with the utmost mystery, giving up every moment that she could spare.

One day, by way of a short cut, the King was passing through the Queen's closet, when he heard the sound of coughing in one of the cupboards. Turning back, he flung it open, where huddled up in great confusion he found Mexica.

"What!" cried His Majesty; "so you are back again? When and how did you come?"

In a feeble voice Mexica answered: "Sire, please don't send me away from the Queen any more, and she will never complain again about Madame de Montespan."

The King laughed at this speech, and then came and repeated it to me. I laughed heartily, too, and such a treaty of peace seemed to contain queer compensation clauses: Madame de Montespan and Mexica were mutually bound over to support each other; the spectacle was vastly droll, I vow.

Besides her little dwarf, the Queen had a fool named Tricominy. This quaint person was permitted to utter, everywhere and to everybody, in

incoherent fashion, the pseudo home-truths that passed through his head. One day he went up to the grand Mademoiselle de Montpensier and said to her before everybody: "Since you are so anxious to get married, marry me, then that will be a man-fool and a woman-fool." The Princess tried to hit him, and he took refuge behind the Queen's chair.

Another time, to M. Letellier, Louvois' brother and Archbishop of Rheims, he said: "Monseigneur, do let me ascend the pulpit in your Cathedral, and I will preach modesty and humanity to you." When the little Duc d'Anjou, that pretty, charming child, died of suppressed measles, the Queen was inconsolable, and the King, good father that he is, was weeping for the little fellow, for he promised much. Says Tricominy: "They're weeping just as if Princes had not got to die like anybody else. M. d'Anjou was no better made than I am, nor of better stuff."

Tricominy was dismissed, because it was plain that his *madness* took a somewhat eccentric turn; that, in fact, he was not fool enough for his place.

The Queen had still got a Spanish girl named Philippa, to whom she was much attached, and

who deserved such flattering attachment. Born in the Escurial Palace, Philippa had been found one night in a pretty cradle at the base of one of the pillars. The palace guards informed King Philip, who adopted the child and brought it up, since it had been foisted upon him as his daughter. He grew fond of the girl, and on coming to Saint Jean de Luz to marry the Infanta to his nephew, the King, he made them a present of Philippa, and begged them both to be very good to her. In this amiable Spanish girl the Infanta recognised a sister. She knew she was an illegitimate daughter of King Philip's and of one of the palace ladies.

When Molina left the Court, she did everything on earth to induce Philippa to return with her to Spain, but the girl was sincerely attached to the Queen, who, holding her in a long embrace, promised to find her a wealthy husband if she would stay. However, the Queen only gave her as husband the Chevalier de Huzé, her cloak-bearer, so as to keep the girl about her person and to be intimate with her daily. Philippa played the mandoline and the guitar to perfection; she also sang and danced with consummate grace.

CHAPTER XLV

LE BOUTHILIER DE RANCÉ, ABBÉ DE LA TRAPPE.

THE Abbé le Bouthilier de Rancé—son of the Secretary of State, Le Bouthilier de Chavigny—after having scandalised Court and town by his public gallantries, lost his mistress, a lady possessed of a very great name and of no less great beauty. His grief bordered upon despair; he forsook the world, gave away or sold his belongings, and went and shut himself up in his Abbey of La Trappe, the only benefice which he had retained. This most ancient monastery was of the Saint Bernard Order, with white clothing. The edifice—spacious, yet somewhat dilapidated—was situated on the borders of Normandy, in a wild, gloomy valley, exposed to fog and frost.

The Abbé found in this a place exactly suitable to his plan, which was to effect reforms of austere character and contrary to nature. He convened

his monks, who were amazed at his arrival and residence; he soundly rated them for the scandalous laxity of their conduct, and having reminded them of all the obligations of their office, he informed them of his new regulations, the nature of which made them tremble. He proposed nothing less than to condemn them to daily manual labour, the tillage of the soil, the performance of menial household duties; and to this he added the practices of immoderate fasting, perpetual silence, downcast glances, veiled countenances, the renouncement of all social ties and all instructive or entertaining literature. In short, he advocated sleeping all together on the bare floor of an ice-cold dormitory, the continual contemplation of Death, the dreadful obligation of digging, while alive, one's own grave every day with one's own hands, and thus, in imagination, burying oneself therein before being at rest there for ever.

As laws so foolish and so tyrannical were read out to them, the worthy monks—all of them of different character and age—openly expressed their discontent. The Abbé de Rancé allowed them to *go and get pleasure* in other monasteries,

and contrived to collect round him youths whom it was easy to delude, and a few elderly misanthropes; with these he formed his doleful, wailing flock.

As he loved notoriety in everything, he had various views of his monastery engraved, and pictures representing the daily pursuits of his laborious community. Such pictures, hawked about everywhere by itinerant vendors of relics and rosaries, served to create for this barbarous reformer a reputation saintly and angelic. In towns, villages, even in royal palaces, he formed the one topic of conversation. Several gentlemen, disgusted either with vice or with society, retired of their own accord to his monastery, where they remained in order that they might the sooner die.

Desirous of enjoying his ridiculous celebrity, the Abbé de Rancé came to Paris, under what pretext I do not remember, firmly resolved to show himself off in all the churches, and *solicit abundant alms* for his phantoms who never touched food. From all sides oblations were forthcoming; soon he had got money enough to build a palace if he had liked.

It being impossible for him to take the august Mademoiselle de Montpensier to his colony of monks, he desired at any rate to induce her to withdraw from the world, and counselled her to enter a Carmelite convent. Mademoiselle's ardent passion for M. de Lauzun seemed to the Trappist Abbé *a scandal;* in fact, his sour spirit could brook no scandal of any sort. "I attended her father as he lay dying," said he, "and to me belongs the task of training, enlightening and sanctifying his daughter. I would have her keep silence; she has spoken too much."

The moment was ill-chosen; just then, Mademoiselle de Montpensier was striving to break the fetters of her dear De Lauzun; she certainly did not wish to get him out of one prison, and then put herself into another. Everyone blamed this reformer's foolish presumption, and Mademoiselle, thoroughly exasperated, forbade her servants to admit him. It was said that he had worked two or three miracles, and brought certain dead people back to life.

"I will rebuild his monastery for him in marble if he will give us back poor little Vexin, and the Duc d'Anjou," said the King to me.

The remark almost brought tears to my eyes, just as I was about to joke with His Majesty about the fellow and his miracles.

Well satisfied with his Parisian harvest, the Abbé le Bouthillier de Rancé, went straight to his convent, where the inmates were persevering enough to be silent, fast, dig, catch their death of cold, and beat themselves for him.

Madame Cormeil, wishing to have a good look at the man, sent to inform him of her illness. Would-be saints are much afraid of words with a double meaning. In no whit disconcerted, he replied that he had devoted his entire zeal to the *poor in spirit*, and that Madame Cormeil was not of their number.

CHAPTER XLVI

THE COURT GOES TO FLANDERS—NANCY—RAVON—SAINTE-MARIE-AUX-MINES—DANCING AND DEATH—A GERMAN SOVEREIGN'S RESPECTFUL VISIT—THE YOUNG STRASBURG PRIESTS—THE GOOD BAILIFF OF CHATENOI—THE BRIDGE AT BRISACH—THE CAPUCIN MONK PRESENTED TO THE QUEEN.

BEFORE relating that which I have to say about the Queen, and her precautions against myself, I would not omit certain curious incidents during the journey that the King caused us to take in Alsatia and Flanders, when he captured Maestricht and Courtrai.

The King having left us behind at Nancy, a splendid town where a large proportion of the nobility grieved for the loss of Messieurs de Lorraine, their legitimate Sovereigns, the Queen soon saw that here she was more honoured than beloved. It was this position which suggested to

her the idea of going to Spa, close by, and of taking the waters for some days.

If the Infanta was anxious to escape from the frigid courtesies of the Lorraine aristocracy, I also longed to have a short holiday, and to keep away from the Queen, as well for the sake of her peace of mind as for my own. My doctor *forbade me* to take the Spa waters, as they were too sulphurous; he ordered me those of Pont-à-Mousson. Hardly had I moved there, when orders came for us all to meet at Lunéville, and thence we set out to rejoin the King.

Horrible was the first night of our journey spent at Ravon, in the Vosges Mountains. The house in which Mademoiselle de Montpensier and I lodged was a dilapidated cottage, full of holes and propped up in several places. Lying in bed, we heard the creaking of the beams and rafters. Two days afterwards the house, so they told us, collapsed.

From that place we went on to Sainte-Marie-aux-Mines, a mean sort of town, placed like a long corridor between two lofty, well-wooded mountains, which even at noonday deprive it of sun. Close

by there is a shallow, rock-bound streamlet which divides Lorraine from Alsace. Sainte-Marie-aux-Mines belonged to the Prince Palatine of Birkenfeld. This Prince offered us his Castle of Reif Auvilliers, an uncommonly beautiful residence, which he had inherited from the Comtesse de Ribaupierre, his wife.

This lady's father was just dead, and as, in accordance with German etiquette, the Count's funeral obsequies could not take place for a month, in the presence of all his relatives and friends, who came from a great distance, the corpse, embalmed and placed in a leaden coffin, lay in state under a canopy in the mortuary-chapel.

Our equerries, seeing that the King's chamber looked on to the mortuary-chapel, took upon themselves to blow out all the candles, and, for the time being, stowed away the corpse in a cupboard.

We knew nothing about this; and, as the castle contained splendid rooms, the ladies amused themselves by dancing and music to make them forget the boredom of their journey.

The King looked in upon us every now and

then, saying in a low voice: "Ah! if you only knew what I know!"

And then he would go off, laughing in his sleeve. We did not get to know about this corpse until five or six days afterwards, when we were a long way off, and the discovery greatly shocked us.

The day we left Sainte-Marie-aux-Mines, a little German Sovereign came to present his homage to the King. It was the Prince de Mont-Béliard, of Würtemberg, whom I had previously met in Paris, on the occasion of his marriage with Marshal de Châtillon's charming daughter. The luxurious splendour of Saint-Germain and Versailles had certainly not yet succeeded in turning the heads of these German Sovereigns. This particular one wore a large buff doublet with big copper-gilt buttons. His cravat was without either ribbons or lace. His rather short hair was roughly combed over his forehead; he carried no sword, and, instead of gold buckles or clasps, he had little bows of red leather on his black velvet shoes. His coach, entirely black, was still of old-fashioned make, that is to say, studded with quantities of gilt nails. Wearing mourning for the Empress,

his six horses were richly caparisoned, his four lackeys wearing yellow liveries faced with red. An escort of twenty guardsmen, dressed similarly, was in attendance; they seemed to be well-mounted, and were handsome fellows.

A second carriage of prodigious size followed the ducal conveyance; in this were twelve ladies and gentlemen, who got out and made their obeisance to the King and Queen.

The Prince de Mont-Béliard did not get into his coach again until ours were in motion. He spoke French fairly well, and the little he said was said with much grace. He looked very hard at me, which shocked the Queen greatly, but not the King.

A little further on, Their Majesties were greeted by the delegates of the noble chapter of Strasburg.[1] These comprised the Count of Manderhall and two canons. What canons, too! And how astonished we were!

The old Count was dressed in a black cassock, and his hair looked somewhat like a cleric's, but his cravat was tied with a large flame-coloured

1 Strasburg was still an imperial town.

bow, and he wore ill-fitting hose of the same hue. As for the two canons, they were pleasant young men, good-looking and well-made.[1] Their light grey dress was edged with black and gold; they wore their hair long in wavy curls, and in their little black velvet caps they had yellow and black feathers, and their silver-mounted swords were like those worn by our young courtiers. Their equipment was far superior to that of the deputation of the Prince de Mont-Béliard. It is true, they were churchmen, and churchmen have only themselves and their personal satisfaction to consider.

These gentlemen accompanied us as far as Chatenoi, a little town in their neighbourhood, and here they introduced the bailiff of the town to the King, who was to remain constantly in attendance and act as interpreter.

The bailiff spoke French with surprising ease. He had been formerly tutor at President Tambonneaux's, an extremely wealthy man, who entertained the Court, the town, and all the cleverest men of the day. The King soon became friends with the

1 One was M. de Fürstenberg's nephew, Bishop of Strasburg, and afterwards Cardinal.

bailiff, and kept him the whole time close to his carriage.

When travelling, the King is quite another man. He puts off his gravity of demeanour, and likes to amuse his companions, or else make his companions amuse him. Believing him to be like Henri IV. in temper, the bailiff was for asking a thousand questions. Some of these the King answered; to others he gave no reply.

"Sire," said he to His Majesty, "your town of Paris has a greater reputation than it actually deserves. They say you are fond of building; then Paris ought to have occasion to remember your reign. Allow me to express a hope that her principal streets will be widened, that her temples, most of them of real beauty, may be isolated. You should add to the number of her bridges, quays, public baths, almshouses and infirmaries."

The King smiled. "Come and see us in four or five years," he rejoined, "or before that, if you like, and if your affairs permit you to do so. You will be pleased to see what I have already done."

Then the bailiff, approaching my carriage

window, addressed a few complimentary remarks to myself.

"I have often met your father, M. de Mortemart," said he, "at President Tambonneaux's. One day the little de Bouillons were there, quarrelling about his sword, and to the younger he said: 'You, sir, shall go into the Church, because you squint. Let my sword alone; here's my rosary.'"

"Well," quoth the King, "M. de Mortemart was a true prophet, for that little Bouillon fellow is to-day Cardinal de Bouillon."

"Sire," continued the worthy German, "I am rejoiced to hear such news. And little Péguilain de Lauzun, of whom you used to be so fond when you were both boys, where is he? What rank does he now hold?"

Hereupon the King looked at Mademoiselle, who, greatly confused, shed tears.

"Well, M. Bailiff," said His Majesty, "did you easily recognise me at first sight?"

"Sire," replied the German, "your physiognomy is precisely the same; when a boy, you looked more serious. The day you entered Parlia-

ment in hunting-dress I saw you get into your coach; and that evening the President said to his wife: 'Madam, we are going to have a king. I wish you could have been there, in one of the domes, just to hear the little he said to us.'"

Whereupon the King laughingly enquired what reply the President's wife made. But the bailiff, smiling in his turn, seemed afraid to repeat it, and so His Majesty said:

"I was told of her answer at the time, so I can let you know what it was. 'Your young King will turn out a despot.' That is what Madame la Président said to her husband."

The bailiff, somewhat confused, admitted that this was exactly the case.

The huge bridge at Brisach across the Rhine had no railing; the planks were in rickety condition, and through fissures one caught sight of the impetuous rush of waters below. We all got out of our coaches and crossed over with our eyes half-shut, so dangerous did it seem; while the King rode across this wretched bridge—one of the narrowest and loftiest that there is, and which is always in motion.

Next day the Bishop of Bâle came to pay his respects to the Queen, and was accompanied by delegates from the Swiss cantons, and other notabilities. After these I heard the "General of the Capucins" announced, who had just been to pay a visit of greeting to the German Court. He was said to be by birth a Roman. Strange to say, for that Capucin the same ceremony and fuss was made as for a sovereign prince, and I heard that this was a time-honoured privilege enjoyed by his Order. The monk himself was a fine man, wearing several decorations; his carriage, livery and train seemed splendid, nor did he lack ease of manner nor readiness of conversation. He told us that, at the imperial palace in Vienna, he had seen the Princess d'Insprück—a relative of the French Queen—and that the Emperor was bringing her up as if destined one day to be *his seventh bride*, according to a prediction. He also stated that the Emperor had made the young Princess sing to him—a Capucin monk; and added genially that she was comely and graceful, and that he had been very pleased to see her.

The King was very merry at this priest's

expense. Not so the Queen, who was Spanish, and particularly devoted to Capucin friars of all nationalities.

CHAPTER XLVII

MOLIÈRE—RACINE—THEIR MUTUAL ESTEEM—RACINE IN MOURNING.

THE King had not much leisure, yet occasionally he gave up half-an-hour, or an hour, to the society of a chosen few—men famous for their wit and brilliant talents. One day he was so kind as to bring to my room the celebrated Molière, to whom he was particularly attached and showed special favour. "Madam," said the King, "here you see the one man in all France who has most wit, most talent, and most modesty and good sense combined. I thank God for letting him be born during my reign, and I pray that He may preserve him to us for a long while yet."

As I hastened to add my own complimentary remarks to those of the King, I certainly perceived that about this illustrious person there was an air of modesty and simplicity such as one does not

commonly find in Apollo's favourites who aspire to fame. Moreover, he was most comely.

Molière told the King that he had just sketched out the plot of his *Malade Imaginaire*, and assured us that hypochondriacs themselves would find something to laugh at when it was played. He spoke very little about himself, but at great length, and with evident admiration, about the young poet Racine.

The King asked if he thought that Racine had strength sufficient to make him the equal of Corneille. "Sire," said the comic poet, "Racine has already surpassed Corneille by the harmonious elegance of his versification, and by the natural, true sensibility of his dialogue; his situations are never fictitious; all his words, his phrases come from the heart. Racine alone is a true poet, for he alone is inspired."

The King, continuing, said: "I cannot witness his tragedy of *Bérénice* without shedding tears. How comes it that Madame Deshoulières and Madame de Sévigné, who have so much mind, refuse to recognise beauties which strike a genius such as yours?"

"Sire," replied Molière, "my opinion is nothing compared to that which Your Majesty has just expressed, such is your sureness of judgment and your tact. I know by experience that those scenes of my comedies which, at a first reading, are applauded by Your Majesty, always win most applause from the public afterwards."

"Is Racine in easy circumstances?" asked the King.

"He is not well off," replied Molière, "but the tragedies which he has in his portfolio will make a rich man of him some day; of that I have not the least doubt."

"Meanwhile," said the King, "take him this draft of six thousand livres[1] from me, nor shall this be the limit of my esteem and affection."

Five or six months after this interview, poor Molière broke a blood-vessel in his chest, while playing with too great fervour the title part in his *Malade Imaginaire*. When they brought the news to the King, he turned pale, and, clasping his hands together, well-nigh burst into tears. "France has lost her greatest genius," he said, before all the

1 Equal to 24,000 francs to-day.

nobles present. "We shall never have anyone like him again; our loss is irreparable!"

When they came to tell us that the Paris clergy had refused burial to "the author of *Tartuffe*," His Majesty graciously sent special orders to the Archbishop, and with a Royal wish of that sort they were obliged to comply, or else give good reasons for not doing so.

Racine went into mourning for Molière. The King heard this, and publicly commended such an act of good feeling and grateful sympathy.

CHAPTER XLVIII

MADAME DE MONTAUSIER AND THE PHANTOM—WHAT SHE EXACTS FROM THE MARQUISE—HER REPROACHES TO THE DUKE—BOSSUET'S COMPLACENCY.

THOSE spiteful persons who told the Queen how obliging the Duchesse de Montausier had shown herself towards me, were also so extremely kind as to write an account of the whole affair to the Marquis de Montespan.

At that time he was still in Paris, and one day he went to the Duchesse just as she was getting out of bed. In a loud voice he proceeded to scold her, daring to threaten her as if she were some common woman; in fact, he caught hold of her and endeavoured to strike her.

The King would not allow M. de Montausier to obtain redress from the Marquis for such an insult as this. He granted a large pension to the Duchesse, and appointed her husband Preceptor to the Dauphin.

Such honours and emoluments partly recompensed the Duchesse, yet they scarcely consoled her. She considered that her good name was all but lost, and what afflicted her still more, was that she never recovered her health. She used to visit me, as our duties brought us together, but it was easy to see that confidence and friendship no longer existed.

One day, when passing along one of the castle corridors, which, being so gloomy, need lamp-light at all hours, she perceived a tall white phantom, which glared hideously at her, and then approaching, vanished. She was utterly prostrated, and on returning to her apartments, was seized with fever and shivering. The doctors perceived that her brain was affected; they ordered palliatives, but we soon saw that there was no counting upon their remedies. She was gradually sinking.

Half-an-hour before she died the Duchesse sent for me, having given instructions that we should be left alone, and that there should be no witnesses. Her intense emaciation was pitiful, and yet her face kept something of its pleasant expression.

"It is because of you, and through you," she exclaimed in a feeble, broken voice, "that I quit this world while yet in the prime of life. God calls me; I must die.

"Kings are so horribly exacting. Everything that ministers to their passions seems feasible to them, and righteous folk must consent to do their pleasure, or suffer the penalty of being disgraced and neglected, and of seeing their long years of service lost and forgotten.

"During that unlucky journey in Brabant, you sought by redoubling your coquetry and fascinations, to allure La Vallière's lover. You managed to succeed; he became fond of you. Knowing my husband's ambitious nature, he easily got him to make me favour this intrigue, and lend my apartments as a meeting-place!

"At Court, nothing long remains a secret. The Queen was warned, and for a while would not believe her informants. But your husband, with brutal impetuousness, burst in upon me. He insulted me in outrageous fashion. He tried to drag me out of bed and throw me out of the window. Hearing me scream, my servants rushed

in and rescued me, in a fainting state, from his clutches. And you it is who have brought upon me such scandalous insults!

"Ready to appear before my God, who has already summoned me by a spectre, I have a boon to ask of you, Madame la Marquise. I beg it of you as I clasp these strengthless, trembling hands. Do not deny me this favour, or I will cherish implacable resentment, and implore my Master and my Judge to visit you with grievous punishment.

"Leave the King," she continued, after drying her tears. "Leave so sensual a being; the slave of his passions, the ravisher of others' good. The pomp and grandeur which surround you and intoxicate you would seem but a little thing did you but look at them as now I do, upon my bed of death.

"The Queen hates me; she is right. She despises me, and justly, too. I shall elude her hatred and disdain which weigh thus heavily upon my heart. Perhaps she may deign to pardon me when my lawyer shall have delivered to her a document, signed by myself, containing my confession and excuses."

As she uttered these words, Madame de Montausier began to vomit blood, and I had to summon her attendants. With a last movement of the head she bade me farewell, and I heard that she called for her husband.

Next day she was dead! Her waiting-maid came to tell me that the Duchesse, conscious to the last, had made her husband promise to resign his appointment as governor to the Dauphin, and withdraw to his estates, where he was to do penance. M. de Meaux, a friend of the family, read the Prayers for the Dying, to which the Duchesse made response, and, three minutes before the final death-throe, she consented to let him preach a funeral sermon in eulogy of herself and her husband.

When printed and published, this discourse was thought to be a fine piece of eloquence.

Over certain things the Bishop passed lightly, while exaggerating others. Some things, again, were entirely of his own invention; and if from the depths of her tomb the Duchesse could have heard all that M. de Meaux said about her, she never would have borne me such malice, nor would

her grief at leaving life and fortune have troubled her so keenly.

The King thought this funeral oration excellently well composed. Of one expression and of one whole passage, however, he disapproved, though which these were he did not do me the honour to say.

CHAPTER XLIX

PRESIDENT DE NESMOND—MELLADORO—A COMPLACENT HUSBAND AND HIS LOVE-SICK WIFE—TRAGIC SEQUEL.

PRESIDENT DE NESMOND—upright, clear-headed magistrate as he was—was of very great service to me at the Courts of Justice. He always managed to oblige me and look after my interests and my rights in any legal dispute of mine, or when I had reason to fear annoyance on the part of my husband.

I will here relate the grief that his young wife caused him, and it will be seen that, by the side of this poor President, M. de Montespan might count himself lucky. Having long been a widower, he was in some measure accustomed to this state, until love laid a snare for him just at the age of sixty-five.

In the garden that lay below his windows—

a garden owned by his neighbour, a farmer—he saw Clorinde. She was this yeoman's only daughter. He at once fell passionately in love with her, as David once loved Bathsheba.

The President married Clorinde, who was very pleased to have a fine name and a title. But her husband soon saw—if not with surprise, at least with pain—that his wife did not love him. A young and handsome Spaniard, belonging to the Spanish Legation, danced one day with Clorinde; to her he seemed as radiant as the god of melody and song. She lost her heart, and, without further delay, confessed to him this loss.

On returning home, the President said to his youthful consort: "Madam, everyone is noticing and censuring your imprudent conduct; even the young Spaniard himself finds it compromising."

"Nothing you say can please me more," she replied, "for this proves that he is aware of my love. As he knows this, and finds my looks to his liking, I hope that he will wish to see me again."

Soon afterwards there was a grand ball given

at the Spanish Embassy. Madame de Nesmond managed to secure an invitation, and went with one of her cousins. The young Spaniard did the honours of the evening and showed them every attention.

As the President was obliged to attend an all-night sitting at the Tourelle,[1] and as these young ladies did not like going home alone—for their residence was some way off—the young Spaniard had the privilege of conducting them to their coach and of driving back with them. After cards and a little music, they had supper about daybreak; and when the President returned, at five o'clock, he saw Melladoro, to whom he was formally introduced by madame.

The President's welcome was a blend of surprise, anger, forced condescension and diplomatic politeness. All these shades of feeling were easily perceived by the Spaniard, who showed not a trace of astonishment. This was because Clorinde's absolute sway over her husband was as patent as the fact that, in his own house, the President was powerless to do as he liked.

1 The parliamentary Criminal Court.

Melladoro, who was only twenty years old, thought he had made a charming conquest. He asked to be allowed to present his respects occasionally, when Clorinde promptly invited him to do so, in her husband's name as well as in her own.

It was now morning, and he took leave of the ladies. Two days after this he reappeared; then he came five or six times a week, until at last it was settled that a place should be laid for him every day at the President's table.

That year it was M. de Nesmond's turn to preside at the courts during vacation-time. He pleaded urgent motives of health, which made it imperative for him to have country air and complete rest. Another judge consented to forego his vacation and take his place on the Bench for four months; so M. de Nesmond was able to leave Paris.

When the time came to set out by coach, madame went off into violent hysterics; but the magistrate, backed up by his father-in-law, showed firmness, and they set out for the Château de Nesmond, about thirty leagues from Paris.

M. de Nesmond found the country far from enjoyable. His wife, who always sat by herself in

her dressing-gown and seldom consented to see a soul, on more than one occasion left her guests at table in order to sulk and mope in her closet.

She fell ill. During her periods of suffering and depression, she continually mentioned the Spaniard's name. Failing his person, she desired to have his portrait. Alarmed at his wife's condition, the President agreed to write a letter himself to the author of all this trouble, who soon sent the lady a handsome sweetmeat-box ornamented with his crest and his portrait.

At the sight of this Clorinde became like another woman. She had her hair dressed and put on a smart gown, to show the portrait how deeply enamoured she was of the original.

"Monsieur," said she to her husband, "I am the only daughter of a wealthy man, who, when he gave me to a magistrate older than himself, did not intend to sacrifice me. You have been young, no doubt, and you, therefore, ought to know how revolting to youth, all freshness and perfume, are the cuddlings and caresses of decrepitude. As yet I do not detest you, but it is absolutely impossible to love you. On the contrary, I am in love with

Melladoro; perhaps, in your day, you were as attractive as he is, and knew how to make the most of what you then possessed. Now, will you please me by going back to Paris? I shall be ever so grateful to you if you will. Or must you spend the autumn in this gloomy abode of your ancestors? To show myself obedient, I will consent; only in this case you must send your secretary to the Spanish Legation, and your coach-and-six, to bring Melladoro here without delay."

At this speech M. de Nesmond could no longer hide his disgust, but frankly refused to entertain such a proposal for one moment. Wherepon, his wife gave way to violent grief. She could neither eat nor sleep, and, being already in a weakly state, soon developed symptoms which frightened her doctors.

M. de Nesmond was frightened, too, and at length sent his rival a polite and pressing invitation to come and stay at the château.

This state of affairs went on for six whole years, during which time Madame de Nesmond lavished upon her comely paramour all the wealth amassed by her frugal, orderly spouse.

At last, the President could stand it no longer, but went and made bitter complaint to the King. His Majesty at once asked the Spanish Ambassador to have Melladoro recalled.

At this news, Clorinde was seized with violent convulsions; so severe, indeed, was this attack that her wretched husband at once sought to have the order rescinded. But, as it transpired, the King's wish had been instantly complied with, and the unwelcome news had to be told to Clorinde.

"If you love me," quoth she to her husband, "then grant me this last favour, after which, I swear it, Clorinde will never make further appeal to your kindheartedness. However quick they have been, my young friend cannot yet have reached the coast. Let me have sight of him once more; let me give him a lock of my hair, a few loving words of advice, and one last kiss before he is lost to me for ever."

So fervent was her pleading and so profuse her tears, that M. de Nesmond consented to do all. His coach-and-six was got ready there and then. An hour before sunset the belfries of Havre

came in sight, and, as it was high tide, they drove right up to the harbour wharf.

The ship had just loosed her moorings, and was gliding out to sea. Clorinde could recognise Melladoro standing amid the passengers on deck. Half fainting, she stretched out her arms and called him in a piteous voice. Blushing, he sought to hide behind his companions, who all begged him to show himself. By means of a wherry, Clorinde soon reached the frigate, and the good-natured sailors helped her to climb up the side of the vessel. But in her agitation and bewilderment her foot slipped, and she fell into the sea, whence she was soon rescued by several of the pluckiest of the crew.

As she was being removed to her carriage, the vessel sailed out of harbour. M. de Nesmond took a large house at Havre, in order to nurse her with greater convenience, and had to stop there for a whole month, his wife being at length brought back on a litter to Paris.

Her convalescence was but an illusion, after all. Hardly had she reached home, than fatal symptoms appeared; she felt that she must die,

but showed little concern thereat. The portrait of the handsome Spaniard lay close beside her on her couch. She smiled at it, besought it to have pity on her loneliness, or scolded it bitterly for indifference, and for going away.

A short time before her death, she sent for her husband and her father, to whom she entrusted the care of her three children.

"Sir," said she to the President de Nesmond, "be kind to my son; he has a right to your name and arms, and though he is my living image, dearest Theodore is your son." Then turning to her father, who was weeping, she said briefly: "All that to-day remains to you of Clorinde are her two daughters. Pray love them as you loved me, and be more strict with them than you were with me. M. de Nesmond owes these orphans nothing. All that Melladoro owes them is affection. Tell him, I pray you, of my constancy and of my death."

Such was the sad end of a young wife who committed no greater crime than to love a man who was agreeable and after her own heart. M. de Nesmond was just enough to admit that, in ill-assorted unions, good sense or good-nature

must intervene, to ensure that the one most to be pitied receive indulgent treatment at the hands of the most culpable, if the latter be also the stronger of the two.

CHAPTER L

MADAME DE MONTESPAN'S CHILDREN AND THOSE OF LA VALLIÈRE—MONSIEUR LE DAUPHIN.

I HAD successively lost the first and second Comte de Vexin; God also chose to take Mademoiselle de Tours from me, who (in what way I know not) was in features the very image of the Queen. Her Majesty was told so, and desired to see my child, and when she perceived how striking was the resemblance, she took a fancy to the charming little girl, and requested that she might frequently be brought to see her. Such friendliness proved unlucky, for the Infanta, as is well known, has never been able to rear one of her children—a great pity, certainly, for she has had five, all handsome, well-made and of gracious, noble mien like the King.

In the case of Mademoiselle de Tours, the Queen managed to conquer her dislike, and also

sent for the Duc du Maine. Despite her affection for M. le Dauphin, she herself admitted that if Monseigneur had the airs of a gentleman, M. le Duc du Maine looked the very type of a King's son.

The Duc du Maine, Madame de Maintenon's special pupil, was so well trained to all the exigencies of his position and his rank, that such premature perfection caused him to pass for a prodigy. Than his, no smile could be more winning and sweet; no one could carry himself with greater dignity and ease. He limps slightly,* which is a great pity, especially as he has such good looks, and so graceful a figure; his lameness, indeed, was entirely the result of an accident—a sad accident, due to teething. To please the King, his governess took him once to Auvez, and twice to the Pyrenees, but neither the waters, nor the Auvez quack doctors could effect a cure. At any rate, I was fortunate enough to bring up this handsome Prince, who, if he treat me with ceremony, yet loves me none the less.

Brought up by the Duc de Montausier, a sort of monkish soldier, and by Bossuet, a sort of military monk, Monsieur le Dauphin had no good

* Sic in orig.

examples from which to profit. Crammed as he is with Latin, Greek, German, Spanish and Church history, he knows all that they teach in colleges, being totally ignorant of all that can only be learnt at the Court of a King. He has no distinction of manner, no polish or refinement of address; he laughs in loud guffaws, and even raises his voice in the presence of his father. Having been born at Court, his way of bowing is not altogether awkward; but what a difference between his salute and that of the King! "Monseigneur looks just like a German Prince." That speech exactly hits him off—a portrait sketched by no other brush than that of his Royal father.

Monseigneur, who does not like me, pays me court the same as anyone else. Being very jealous of the pretty Comte de Vermandois and his brother, the Duc du Maine, he tries to imitate their elegant manner, but is too stiff to succeed. The Duc du Maine shows him the respect inspired by his governess, but the Comte de Vermandois, long separated from his mother, has been less coached in this respect, and, being thoroughly candid and sincere, shows little restraint. Often, instead of

styling him "Monseigneur," he calls him merely "Monsieur le Dauphin," while the latter, as if such a title were common or of no account, looks at his brother and makes no reply.

When I told the King about such petty fraternal tiffs, he said: "With age, all that will disappear; as a man grows taller, he gets a better, broader view of his belongings."

M. le Dauphin shows a singular preference for Mademoiselle de Nantes, but my daughter, brimful of wit and fun, often makes merry at the expense of her exalted admirer.

Mademoiselle de Blois, the eldest daughter of Madame de La Vallière, is the handsomest, most charming person it is possible to imagine. Her slim, graceful figure reminds one of the beautiful goddesses with whom poets entertain us; she abounds in accomplishments and every sort of charm. Her tender solicitude for her mother, and their constant close companionship have, doubtless, served to quicken her intelligence and penetration.

Like the King, she is somewhat grave; she has the same large brown eyes, and just his Austrian lip, his shapely hand and well-turned leg,

almost his selfsame voice. Madame de La Vallière, who, in the intervals of pregnancy, had no bosom to speak of, has shown marked development in this respect since living at the convent. The Princess, ever since she attained the age of puberty, has always seemed adequately furnished with physical charms. The King provided her with a husband in the person of the Prince de Conti, a nephew of the Prince de Condé. They are devotedly attached to each other, being both as handsome as can be. The Princesse de Conti enjoys the entire affection of the Queen, who becomes quite uneasy if she does not see her for five or six days.

Certain foreign Princes proposed for her hand, when the King replied that the presence of his daughter was as needful to him as daylight or the air he breathed.

I have here surely drawn a most attractive portrait of this Princess, and I ought certainly to be believed, for Madame de Conti is not fond of me at all. Possibly she looks upon me as the author of her mother's disgrace; I shall never be at pains to undeceive her. Until the moment of

her departure, Madame de La Vallière used always to visit me. The evening before her going she took supper with me, and I certainly had no cause to read in her looks either annoyance or reproach. Mademoiselle de Montpensier, who happened to call, saw us at table, and stayed to have some dessert with us. She has often told me afterwards how calm and serene the Duchess looked. One would never have thought she was about to quit a brilliant Court for the hair shirt of the ascetic, and all the death-in-life of a convent. I grieved for her, I wept for her, and I got her a grand gentleman as a husband.[1]

1 This statement is scarcely reconcilable with the fact that Madame de La Vallière remained in a convent until her death. This may refer to Mademoiselle de Blois, La Vallière's daughter, who was given in marriage to the Prince de Conti.—TRANSLATOR'S NOTE.

CHAPTER LI

MADAME DE MAINTENON'S CHARACTER—THE QUEEN LIKES HER—SHE REVISITS HER FAMILY—HER GRANDFATHER'S PAPERS RESTORED TO HER.

As Madame de Maintenon's character happened to please the King, as I have already stated, he allotted her handsome apartments at Court while waiting until he could keep her there as a fixture, by conferring upon her some important appointment. She had the honour of being presented to the Queen, who paid her a thousand compliments respecting the Duc du Maine's perfections, being so candid and so good-natured as to say:

"You would have been just the person to educate Monseigneur."

Unwilling to appear as if she slighted the Dauphin's actual tutors, Madame de Maintenon adroitly replied that, as it seemed to her, M. le Dauphin had been brought up like an angel.

It is said that I have special talent for sustaining and enlivening a conversation; there is something in that, I admit, but to do her justice, I must say that in this respect Madame de Maintenon is without a rival. She has quite a wealth of invention, the most arid subject in her hands becomes attractive; while for transitions, her skill is unequalled. Far simpler than myself, she gauges her whole audience with a single glance. And as, since her misfortunes, her rule has been never to make an enemy, since these easily crop up along one's path, she is careful never to utter anything which could irritate the feelings or wound the pride of the most sensitive. Her descriptions are so varied, so vivacious, that they fascinate a whole crowd. If now and again some little touch of irony escapes her, she knows how to temper, and even instantly to neutralize, this by terms of praise at once natural and simple.

Under the guise of an extremely pretty woman, she conceals the knowledge and tact of a statesman. I have, moreover, noticed that latterly the King likes to talk about matters of State when she is present. He rarely did this with me.

I think she is at the outset of a successful career. The King made persistent enquiries with regard to her whole family. He has already conferred a petty governorship upon the Comte d'Aubigné, her brother, . and the Marquis de la Gallerie, their cousin, has just received the command of a regiment and a pension.

Madame de Maintenon readily admits that she owes her actual good fortune to myself. I also saw one of her letters to Madame de Saint-Géran, in which she refers to me in terms of gratitude. Sometimes, indeed, she goes too far, even siding with my husband, and condemning what she dares to term my conduct—however, this is only to my face. I have always liked her, and, in spite of her affronts, I like her still; but there are times when I am less tolerant, and then we are like two persons just about to fall out.

The Comte de Toulouse and Mademoiselle de Blois were not entrusted to her at their birth as the others were. The King thought that the additional responsibility of their education would prove too great for the Marquise. He preferred to enjoy her society and conversation, so my two

youngest children were placed in the care of Madame d'Arbon, a friend or stewardess of M. de Colbert's. Not a great compliment, as I take it.

When, for the second time, Madame de Maintenon took the Duc du Maine to Barège, she returned by way of the Landes, Guienne and Poitou. She wished to revisit her native place, and show her pupil to all her relations. Perceiving that she was a Marchioness, the instructress of Princes, and a personage in high favour, they were lavish of their compliments and their praise, yet forebore to give her back her property.

Knowing that she was a trifle vain about her noble birth, they made over to her the great family pedigree, as well as a most precious manuscript. These papers, found to be quite correct, included a most spirited history of the War of the League, written by Baron Agrippa d'Aubigné, who might rank as an authority upon the subject, having fought against the Leaguers for over fifteen years. Among these documents the King found certain details that hitherto had been forgotten, or had never yet come to light. And, as the Baron was Henri IV.'s favourite aide-de-camp, every reference

that he makes to that good King is of importance and interest.

This manuscript, in the simplest manner possible, set forth the governess's ancestors. I am sure she was more concerned about this document than about her property.

CHAPTER LII

THE YOUNG FLEMISH LADY — THE SAINTE-ALDEGONDE FAMILY—THE SAGE OF THE SEPULCHRES.

JUST at the time of the conquest of Tournai, a most amusing thing occurred, which deserves to be chronicled. Another episode may be recorded also, of a gloomier nature.

Directly Tournai had surrendered, and the new outposts were occupied, the King wished to make his entry into this important town, which he had long desired to see. The people and the burghers, although mute and silent, willingly watched the French army and its King march past, but the aristocracy scarcely showed themselves at any of the windows, and the few folk who appeared here and there on the balconies abstained from applauding the King.

Splendidly apparelled, and riding the loveliest

of milk-white steeds, His Majesty proceeded upon his triumphant way, surrounded by the flower of French nobility, and scattering money as he went.

Before the Town Hall the procession stopped, when the magistrates delivered an address, and gave up to His Majesty the keys of the city in a large enamelled bowl.

When the King, looking calmly contented, was about to reply, he observed a woman who had pushed her way through the French guardsmen, and, staring hard at him, appeared anxious to get close up to him. In fact, she advanced a step or two, and the epithet that crossed her lips struck the conqueror as being coarsely offensive.

"Arrest that female," cried the King. She was instantly seized and brought before him.

"Why do you insult me thus?" he asked quickly, but with dignity.

"I have not insulted you," replied the Flemish lady. "The word that escaped me was rather a term of flattery and of praise, at least if it has the meaning which it conveys to us here, in these semi-French parts."

"Say that word again," added the King, "for

I want everybody to bear witness that I am just in punishing you for such an insult."

"Sire," answered this young woman, "your soldiers have destroyed my pasture-lands, my woods, and my crops. Heart-broken, I came here to curse you, but your appearance at once made me change my mind. On looking closer at you, in spite of my grief, I could not help exclaiming: 'So that's the handsome b——, is it!'"

The grenadiers, being called as witnesses, declared that such was in fact her remark. Then the King smiled, and said to the young Flemish lady:

"Who are you? What is your name?"

With readiness and dignity she replied, "Sire, you see before you the Comtesse de Sainte-Aldegonde."

"Pray, madam," quoth the King, "be so good as to finish your toilet; I invite you to dine with me to-day."

Madame de Sainte-Aldegonde accepted the honour, and did in fact dine with His Majesty that day. She was clever, and made herself most agreeable, so that the King, whose policy it was

to win hearts by all concessions possible, indemnified her for all losses sustained during the war, besides granting favours to all her relatives and friends.

The Sainte-Aldegonde family appeared at Court, being linked thereto by good services. It is already a training-ground for excellent officers and persons of merit.

But for that somewhat neat remark of the Countess's, all those gentlemen would have remained in poverty and obscurity, within the walls, or in the suburbs of Tournai.

Some days after this the King was informed of the arrest of a most dangerous individual, who had been caught digging below certain ancient aqueducts "with a view to preparing a mine of some sort." This person was brought in, tied and bound like a criminal; they hustled him and maltreated him. I noticed how he trembled and shed tears.

He was a learned man—an antiquary. A few days before our invasion he had commenced certain excavations, which he had been forced to discontinue, and now, so great was his impatience that

he had been obliged to go on in spite of the surrounding troops. By means of an old manuscript, long kept by the Druids as also by monks, this man had been able to discover traces of an old Roman high-road, and as in the days of the Romans the tombs of the rich and the great were always placed alongside these broad roads, our good antiquary had been making certain researches there which, for him, had proved to be a veritable gold-mine.

Having made confession of all this to the King, His Majesty set him free, granting him, moreover, complete liberty as regarded the execution of his enterprise.

A few days afterwards, he begged to have the honour of presenting to His Majesty some of the objects which he had collected during his researches. I was present; and the following are the funereal curiosities which he showed us.

Having broken open a tomb, he had extracted therefrom a large alabaster vase, which still contained the ashes of the deceased. Next this urn, carefully sealed up, there was another vase containing three gold rings adorned with precious

stones, two gold spurs, the bit of a battle-horse, very slightly rusted and chased with silver and gold, a sort of seal with rough coat-of-arms, a necklace of large and very choice pearls, a stylet or pencil for calligraphy, and a hundred gold and silver coins bearing the effigy of Domitian, a very wicked Emperor, who reigned over Rome and over Gaul in those days.

When the King had amused himself with examining these trinkets, he turned to the antiquary and said: "Is that all, sir? Why, where is Charon's flask of wine?"

"Here, Your Majesty," replied the old man, producing a small flask. "See, the wine has become quite clear."

With great difficulty the flask was opened; the wine it contained was pale and odourless, but, by those bold enough to taste it, was pronounced *delicious*.

When overturning the urn in order to empty out the ashes and bury them, they noticed an inscription, which the King instantly translated. It ran thus:

"May the gods who guard tombs punish him

who breaks open this mausoleum. The troubles and misfortunes of Aurelius Silvius have been cruel enough during his lifetime; in this tomb at least let him have peace."

The worthy antiquary offered me his pearl necklace, and one of the antique rings, but I refused these with a look of horror. He sold the coins to the King, and informed us that his various excavations and researches, had brought him in about one hundred thousand livres[1] up to the present time.

The King said to him playfully: "Mind what you are about, sir; that sentence which I translated for you is not of a very reassuring nature."

"Yet it will not serve to hinder me in my scientific researches," replied the savant. "Charon, who by now must be quite a rich man, evidently disdains all such petty hidden treasures as these. To me they are most useful."

Next time we passed through Tournai, I made enquiries as to this miser, and afterwards informed the King. It appears that he was surprised by robbers when despoiling one of these tombs. After

1 About 400,000 francs.—EDITOR'S NOTE.

robbing him of all that he possessed, they buried him alive in the very grave where he was digging, so as to save expense. What a dismal sort of science! What a life, and what a death!

CHAPTER LIII

THE MONKS OF SAINTE-AMANDINE — THE PRINCE OF ORANGE ENTRAPPED — THE DRUGGED WINE — THE ADMIRABLE JUDITH.

AFTER the furious siege of Condé, which only lasted four days, the King, who had been present, left for Sebourg, whence he sent orders for the destruction of the principal forts of Liège, and for the ravaging of the Juliers district. He treated the Neubourg estates in the same ruthless fashion, as the Duke had abandoned his attitude of neutrality, and had joined the Empire, Holland and Spain. All the Cleves district, and those between the Meuse and the Vahal were subjected to heavy taxation. Everywhere one saw families in flight, castles sacked, homesteads and convents in flames.

The Duc de Villa-Hermosa, Governor-general in Flanders for the King of Spain, and William of Orange, the Dutch leader, went hither and thither

all over the country endeavouring to rouse the people, and spur them on to offer all possible resistance to the King of France.

These two noble *generalissimi* even found their way into monasteries and nunneries, and carried off their silver plate, actually seizing the consecrated vessels used for the Sacrament, saying that all such things would help the good cause.

One day they entered a wealthy Bernardine monastery, where the miraculous tomb of Sainte-Amandine was on view. The great veneration shown for this saint in all the country thereabouts had served greatly to enrich the community and bring them in numerous costly offerings. The chapel wherein the saint's heart was said to repose, was lighted by a huge gold lamp, and on the walls and in niches right up to the ceiling were thousands of votive offerings in enamel, silver and gold. The Duc de Villa-Hermosa (a good Catholic) dared not give orders for the pillage of this holy chapel, but left that to the Prince of Orange (a good Huguenot).

One evening they came to ask the prior for shelter, who, seeing that he was at the mercy

of both armies, had to show himself pleasant to each.

During supper, when the two generals informed him of the object of their secret visit, he clearly perceived that the monastery was about to be sacked, and, like a man of resource, at once made up his mind. When dessert came, he gave his guests *wine that had been drugged.* The generals, growing drowsy, soon fell asleep, and the prior at once caused them to be carried off to a cell and placed upon a comfortable bed.

This done, he celebrated midnight Mass as usual, and at its close he summoned the whole community, telling them of their peril and inviting counsel and advice.

"My brethren," asked he, "ought we not to look upon our two prisoners as profaners of holy places, and serve them in secret and before God as once the admirable Judith served Holophernes?"

At this proposal there was a general murmur. The assembly grew agitated, but, seeing how perilous was the situation, order was soon restored.

The old monks were of opinion that the two generals ought not yet to be sacrificed, but should

be shut up in a subterranean dungeon, a messenger being sent forthwith to the French King announcing their capture.

The young monks protested loudly against such an act, declaring it to be treacherous, disgraceful, felonious. The prior endeavoured to make them listen to reason and be silent, but the young monks, though in a minority, got the upper hand. They deposed the prior, abused and assaulted him, and finally flung him into prison. One of them was appointed prior without ballot, and this new leader, followed by his adherents, roused the generals and officiously sent them away.

The prior's nephew, a young Bernardine, accompanied by a lay-brother and two or three servants, set out across country that night, and brought information to the King of all this disorder, begging His Majesty to save his worthy uncle's life.

At the head of six hundred dragoons, the King hastened to the convent and at once rescued the prior, sending the good *old* monks of Sainte-Amandine to Citeaux, and dispersing the rebellious *young* ones among the Carthusian and Trappist

monasteries. All the treasures contained in the Chapel he had transferred to his camp, until a calmer, more propitious season.

That priceless capture, the Prince of Orange, escaped him, however, and he was inconsolable thereat, adding, as he narrated the incident, "Were it not that I feared to bring dishonour upon my name, and sully the history of my reign and my life, I would have massacred those young Saint-Bernard monks."

"What a vile breed they all are!" I cried, losing all patience.

"No, no, madam," he quickly rejoined, "you are apt to jump from one extreme to the other. It does not do to generalise thus. The young monks at Sainte-Amandine showed themselves to be my enemies, I admit, and for this I shall punish them as they deserve, but the poor old monks merely desired my success and advantage. When peace is declared, I shall take care of them and of their monastery; the prior shall be made an abbot. I like the poor fellow; so will you, when you see him."

I really cannot see why the King should have

taken such a fancy to this old monk, who was minded to murder a couple of generals in his convent because, forsooth, Judith once slew Holophernes! Judith might have been tempted to do that sort of thing; she was a Jewess. But a Christian monk! I cannot get over it!

CHAPTER LIV

THE CHEVALIER DE ROHAN—HE IS BORN TOO LATE—HIS DEBTS—MESSINA CEDED TO THE FRENCH—THE KING OF SPAIN MEDITATES REVENGE — THE COMTE DE MONTEREY—MADAME DE VILLARS AS CONSPIRATOR — THE PICPUS SCHOOLMASTER — THE PLOT FAILS — DISCOVERY AND RETRIBUTION—MADAME DE SOUBISE'S INDIFFERENCE TO THE CHEVALIER'S FATE.

HAD he been born fifty or sixty years earlier, the Chevalier de Rohan might have played a great part. He was one of those men, devoid of restraint and of principle, who love pleasure above all things, and who would sacrifice their honour, their peace of mind, aye, even the State itself, if such a sacrifice were really needed, in order to attain their own personal enjoyment and satisfaction.

The year before, he once invited himself to dinner at my private residence at Saint-Germain, and he then gave me the impression of being a

madman, or a would-be conspirator. My sister de Thianges noticed the same thing, too.

"The Chevalier had squandered his fortune five or six years previously; his bills were innumerable. Each day he sank deeper into debt, and the King remarked: 'The Chevalier de Rohan will come to a bad end; it will never do to go on as he does.'"

Instead of keeping an eye upon him, and affectionately asking him to respect his family's honour, the Prince and Princess de Soubise[1] made as if it were their duty to ignore him and blush for him.

Profligacy, debts and despair drove this unfortunate nobleman to make a resolve such as might never be expected of any high-born gentleman.

Discontented with their governor, Don Diego de Soria, the inhabitants of Messina had just shaken off the Spanish yoke, and had surrendered to the King of France, who proffered protection and help.

Such conduct on the part of the French Government seemed to the King of Spain most disloyal, and he desired nothing better than to revenge himself. This is how he set about it.

1 Heads of the Rohan family.—EDITOR'S NOTE.

On occasions of this kind it is always the crafty who are sought out for such work. Comte de Monterey was instructed to sound the Chevalier de Rohan upon the subject, offering him safety and a fortune as his reward. Pressed into their service there was also the Marquise de Villars—a frantic gambler, a creature bereft of all principle and all modesty—to whom a sum of twenty thousand crowns in cash was paid over beforehand, with the promise of a million directly success was ensured. She undertook to manage Rohan and tell him what to do. Certain ciphers had to be used, and to these the Marquise had the key. They needed a messenger both intelligent and trustworthy, and for this mission she gave the Chevalier an ally in the person of an ex-teacher in the Flemish school at Picpus, on the Faubourg Saint-Antoine. This man and the Chevalier went secretly to the Comte de Monterey in Flanders, and by this trio it was settled that on a certain day, at high tide, Admiral Trompp with his fleet should anchor off Honfleur or Quilleboeuf in Normandy, and that, at a given signal, La Truaumont, the Chevalier de Préaux and the Chevalier de Rohan were to sur-

render to him the town and port without ever striking a single blow, all this being for the benefit of His Majesty the King of Spain.

But all was discovered. The five culprits were examined, when the Marquise de Villars stated that the inhabitants of Messina had given them an example which the King of France had not condemned!

The Marquise and the two Chevaliers were beheaded, while the ex-schoolmaster was hanged. As for young La Truaumont, son of a councillor of the Exchequer, he escaped the block by letting himself be throttled by his guards or gaolers, to whom he offered no resistance.

Despite her influence upon the King's feelings, the Princess de Soubise did not deign to take the least notice of the trial, and they say that she drove across the Pont-Neuf in her coach just as the Chevalier de Rohan, pinioned and barefooted, was marching to his doom.

CHAPTER LV

THE PRINCE OF ORANGE CAPTURES BONN — THE KING CAPTURES ORANGE — THE CALVINISTS OF ORANGE OFFER RESISTANCE.

SINCE Catilina's famous hatred for Consul Cicero, there has never been hatred so deep and envenomed as that of William of Orange for the King. For this loathing, cherished by a petty Prince for a great potentate, various reasons have been given. As for myself, I view things closely and in their true light, and I am convinced that Prince William was actuated by sheer jealousy and envy.

It was affirmed that the King, when intending to give him as bride Mademoiselle de Blois, his eldest daughter and great favourite, had offered to place him on the Dutch throne as independent King, and that to such generous proposals the petty Stadtholder replied: "I am not pious enough

to marry the daughter of a Carmelite nun." So absurd a proposal as this, however, was never made, for the simple reason that Mademoiselle de Blois has never yet been offered in marriage to any prince or nobleman in this wide world. Rather than be parted from her, the King would prefer her to remain single. He has often said as much to me, and there is no reason to doubt his word.

The little Principality of Orange, which once formed the estate of this now outlandish family, is situate close to the Rhône, amid French territory. Though decorated with the title of *sovereignty* like its neighbour, the Principality of Dombes, it is no less a fief-land of the Crown. In this capacity it has to contribute to the Crown revenues, and owes homage and fealty to the Sovereign.

Such petty, formal restrictions are very galling to the arrogant young Prince of Orange, for he is one of those men who desire, at all cost, to make a noise in the world, and who would set fire to Solomon's Temple or to the Delphian Temple, it mattered not which, so long as they made people talk about them.

After Turenne's death, there was a good deal

of rivalry among our generals. This proved harmful to the service. The Goddess of Victory discovered this, and at times forsook us. Many possessions that were conquered had to be given up, and we had to bow before those whom erst we had humiliated. But Orange was never restored.[1]

When, in November, 1673, the Prince of Orange had the audacity to besiege Bonn, the residence of our ally, the Prince Elector of Cologne, and to reduce that prelate to the last extremity, the King promptly seized upon the Principality of Orange; and having planted the French flag upon every building, he published a general decree, strictly forbidding the inhabitants to hold any communication whatever with "their former petty sovereign," and ordering prayers to be said for him, Louis, in all their churches. This is a positive fact.

The Roman Catholics readily complied with this Royal decree, which was in conformity with their sympathies and their interests; but the Protestants waxed furious thereat. Some of them even carried their devotion to such a pitch that

1 This was written in 1677.—EDITOR'S NOTE.

they paid taxes to two masters; that is to say, to Stadtholder William, as well as to His Majesty the King.

The Huguenot "ministers," or priests, issued Pastoral Letters in praise of the Calvinist Prince and in abuse of the Most Christian King. They also preached against the new oath of fealty, and committed several most imprudent acts, which the Jesuits were not slow to remark and report in Court circles.

Such audacity, and the need for its repression, rankled deep in the King's heart; and I believe he is quite disposed to pass measures of such extreme severity as will soon deprive the Protestants and Lutherans of any privileges derived from the Edict of Nantes.

From various sources I receive the assurance that he is preparing to deal a heavy blow anent this; but the King's character is impenetrable. Time alone will show.

CHAPTER LVI

THE CASTLE OF BLEINK-ELMEINK—ROMANTIC AND EXTRAORDINARY DISCOVERY—AN INNOCENT AND PERSECUTED WIFE—MADAME DE BLEINK-ELMEINK AT CHAILLOT.

AFTER the siege and surrender of Maestricht, when the King had no other end in view than the entire conquest of Dutch Brabant, he took us to this country, which had suffered greatly by the war. Some districts were wholly devastated, and it became increasingly difficult to find lodging and shelter for the Court.

The grooms-of-the-chambers one day found for us a large château, situate in a woody ravine, old-fashioned in structure, and surrounded by a moat. There was only one drawbridge, flanked by two tall towers, surmounted by turrets and culverins. Its owner was in residence at the time. He came to the King and the Queen, and, greeting them in French, placed his entire property at their disposal.

It had rained in torrents for two days without

ceasing. Despite the season, everybody was wet through and benumbed with cold. Large fires were made in all the huge fire-places; and, when the castle's vast rooms were lighted up by candles, we agreed that the architect had not lacked grandeur of conception nor good taste when building such large corridors, massive staircases, lofty vestibules, and spacious, resounding rooms. That given to the Queen was like an alcove, decorated by six large marble Caryatides, joined by a handsome balustrade high enough to lean upon. The four-post bed was of azure blue velvet, with flowered work and rich gold and silver tasselling. Over the chimneypiece was the huge Bleink-Elmeink coat-of-arms, supported by two tall Templars.

The King's apartment was an exact reproduction of a room existing at Jerusalem in the time of Saint-Louis; this was explained by inscriptions and devices in Gothic or Celtic.

My room was supposed to be an exact copy of the famous Pilate's chamber, and it was named so; and for three days my eyes were rejoiced by the detailed spectacle of our Lord's Passion, from His flagellation to His agony on Calvary.

The Queen came to see me in this room, and did me the honour of being envious of so charming an apartment.

The fourth day, when the weather became fine, we prepared to change our quarters and take to our carriages again, when an extraordinary event obliged us to send a messenger for the King, who had already left us, and had gone forward to join the army.

An old peasant, still robust and in good health, performed in this gloomy castle the duties of a housekeeper. In this capacity she frequently visited our rooms to receive our orders and satisfy our needs.

Seeing that the Queen's boxes were being closed, and that our departure was at hand, she came to me and said:

"Madam, the Sovereign Lord of Heaven has willed it thus, that the officers of the French King should have discovered as the residence of his Court this castle amid gloomy forests and precipices. The great Prince has come hither and has stayed here for a brief while, and we have sought to welcome him as well as we could. He

gave the Comte de Bleink-Elmeink, lord of this place and my master, his portrait set in diamonds; he had far better have cut his throat."

"Good heavens, woman! What is this you tell me?" I exclaimed. "Of what crime is your master guilty? He seems to me to be somewhat moody and unsociable; but his family is of good renown, and all sorts of good things have been told concerning it to the King and Queen."

"Madam," replied the old woman, drawing me aside into a window-recess, and lowering her voice, "do you see at the far end of yonder court an old dungeon of much narrower dimensions than the others? In that dungeon lies the good Countess de Bleink-Elmeink; she has languished there for five years."

Then this woman informed me that her master, formerly page-of-honour to the Empress Eleanor, had wedded, on account of her great wealth, a young Hungarian noblewoman, by whom he had two children, both of whom were living. Such was his dislike of their mother, on account of a slight deformity, that for four or five years he shamefully maltreated her, and at last shut her

up in this dungeon-keep, allowing her daily the most meagre diet possible.

"When, some few days since, the royal stewards appeared in front of the moat, and claimed admittance, the Count was much alarmed," added the peasant woman. "He thought that all was discovered, and that he was going to suffer for it. It was not until the King and Queen came that he was reassured, and he has not been able to hide his embarrassment from any of us."

"Where are the two children of his marriage?" I asked the old woman, before deciding to act.

"The young Baron," she answered, "is at Vienna or Olmütz, at an academy there. His sister, a graceful, pretty girl, has been in a convent from her childhood; the nuns have promised to keep her there, and, as soon as she is fourteen, she will take the veil."

My first impulse was to acquaint the Queen with these astounding revelations, but it soon struck me that, to tackle a man of such importance as the Count, we could not do without the King. I at once sent my secretary with a note, imploring His Majesty to return, but giving no reason for

my request. He came back immediately, post-haste, when the housekeeper repeated to him, word for word, all that I have set down here. The King could hardly believe his ears.

When coming to a decision, His Majesty never does so precipitately. He paced up and down the room twice or thrice, and then said to me: "The matter is of rather singular a nature; I am unacquainted with law, and what I propose to do may one day serve as an example. It is my duty to rescue our unfortunate hostess, and requite her nobly for her hospitality."

So saying, he sent for the Count, and assuming a careless, almost jocular air, thus addressed him:

"You were formerly page to the Empress Eleanor, I believe, M. le Bleink-Elmeink?"

"Yes, Sire."

"She is dead, but the Emperor would easily recognise you, would he not?"

"I imagine so, Sire."

"I have thought of you as a likely person to be the bearer of a message, some one of your age and height being needed, and of grave, *secretive*

temperament, such as I notice you to possess. Get everything in readiness, as I intend to send you as courier to His Imperial Majesty. I am going to write to him from here, and you shall bring me back his reply to my proposals."

To be sent off like this was most galling to the Count, but his youth and perfect health allowed him not the shadow of a pretext. He was obliged to pack his valise and start. He pretended to look pleased and acquiescent, but in his eyes I could detect fury and despair.

Half-an-hour after his departure, the King had the drawbridge raised, and then went to inform the Queen of everything.

"Madam," said he, "you have been sleeping in this unfortunate lady's nuptial bed. She is now about to be presented to you. I ask that you will receive her kindly, and afterwards act as her protector, should anything happen to me."

Tears filled the Queen's eyes, and she trembled in amazement. The King instantly made for the dungeon, and, in default of a key, broke open all the gates. In a few minutes Madame de Bleink-Elmeink, supported by two guards,

entered the Queen's presence, and was about to fling herself at her feet; but the King prevented this. He himself placed her in an armchair, and we others at once formed a large semicircle round her.

She seemed to breathe with difficulty, sighing and sobbing without being able to utter a word. At length she said to the King in fairly good French: "May my Creator and yours reward you for this great and unexpected boon! Do not forsake me, Sire, now that you have broken my fetters, but let your might protect me against the unjust violence of my husband; and permit me to reside in France in whatever convent it please you to choose. My august liberator shall become my lawful King, and under his rule I desire to live and die."

In spite of her sorrow, Madame de Bleink-Elmeink did not appear to be more than twenty-eight or thirty years old. Her large blue eyes, though she had wept much, were still splendid, and her highbred features denoted nobility and beauty of soul. To such a charming countenance her figure scarcely corresponded; one side of her was slightly deformed, yet this did not interfere with the grace

of her attitude when seated, nor her agreeable deportment.

Directly she saw her, the Queen liked her. She looked half-longingly at the Countess, and then, rising, approached her and held out her hand to be kissed, saying: "I mean to love you as if you were one of my own family; you shall be placed at Val-de-Grâce, and I will often come and see you."

Recovering herself somewhat, the Countess sank on her knees and kissed the Queen's hand in a transport of joy. We led her to her room, where she took a little refreshment and afterwards slept until the following day. All her servants and gardeners came to express their gladness at her deliverance; and, in order to keep her company, the Queen decided to stay another week at the Castle. The Countess then set out for Paris, and it was arranged that she should have the apartments at Chaillot once constructed by the Queen of England.

As for her dreadful husband, the King gave him plenty to do, and he did not see his wife again for a good long while.

CHAPTER LVII

THE SILVER CHANDELIER—THE KING HOLDS THE LADDER —THE YOUNG DUTCHMAN.

ONE day the King was passing through some of the large rooms of the palace, at a time of the morning when the courtiers had not yet made their appearance, and when carpenters and workmen were about, each busy in getting his work done.

The King noticed a workman of some sort standing tiptoe on a double ladder, and reaching up to unhook a large chandelier from the ceiling. The fellow seemed likely to break his neck.

"Be careful," cried the King; "don't you see that your ladder is a short one and is on castors? I have just come in time to help you by holding it."

"Sir," said the man, "a thousand pardons, but if you will do so, I shall be much obliged. On account of this ambassador who is coming to-

day, all my companions have lost their heads and have left me alone."

Then he unhooked the large crystal and silver chandelier, stepped down carefully, leaning on the King's shoulder, who graciously allowed him to do so. After humbly thanking him, the fellow made off.

That night in the château everyone was talking about the hardihood of some thief who, in sight of everybody, had stolen a handsome chandelier; the Lord High Provost had already been apprised of the matter. The King began to smile as he said out loud before everyone: "I must request the Lord High Provost to be good enough to hush the matter up, as, in cases of theft, accomplices are punished as well, and it was I who held the ladder for the thief."

Then His Majesty told us of the occurrence, as already narrated, and everyone was convinced that the thief could not be a novice or an apprentice at his craft. Enquiries were instantly made, since so bold an attempt called for exemplary punishment. All the upholsterers of the castle wished to give themselves up as prisoners; their honour was compromised. It would be hard to

describe their consternation, being in truth honest folk.

When the Provost respectfully asked the King if he had had time to notice the culprit's features, His Majesty replied that the workman in question was a young fellow of about five-and-twenty, fair-complexioned, with chestnut hair, and pleasant features of delicate, almost feminine cast.

At this news, all the dark, plain men-servants were exultant; the good-looking ones, however, were filled with fear.

Among the *feutiers*, whose sole duty it is to attend to the fires and candles in the royal apartments, there was a nice-looking young Dutchman, whom his companions pointed out to the Provost. They entered his room while he was asleep, and found in his cupboard the following articles: Two of the King's lace cravats, two shirts marked with a double L and the crown, a pair of pale blue velvet shoes embroidered with silver, a flowered waistcoat, a hat with white and scarlet plumes, other trifles, and a splendid portrait of the King, evidently part of some bracelet. As regarded the chandelier, nothing was discovered.

When this young foreigner was taken to prison, he refused to speak for twenty-four hours, and in all Versailles there was but one cry: "They've caught the thief!"

Next day, matters appeared in a new light. The Provost informed His Majesty that the young servant arrested was not a Dutchman, but a very pretty *Dutchwoman.*

At the time of the invasion, she was so unlucky as to see the King close to her father's house, and conceived so violent a passion for him that she at once forgot country, family, friends—everything. Leaving the Netherlands with the French army, she followed her conqueror back to his capital, and by dint of perseverance managed to secure employment in the royal palace. While there, her one delight was to see the King as often as possible, and to listen to praise of his many noble deeds.

"The articles found in my possession," said she to the Provost, "are most dear and precious to me; not for their worth, but because they have touched the King's person. I did not steal them from His Majesty; I could not do such a thing.

I bought them of the *valets de chambre*, who were by right entitled to such things, and who would have sold them indiscriminately to anyone else. The portrait was not sold to me, I admit, but I got it from Madame la Marquise de Montespan, and in this way: One day, in the parterres, madame dropped her bracelet. I had the good fortune to pick it up, and I kept it for three or four days in my room. Then bills were posted up in the park, stating that whoever brought the bracelet to madame should receive a reward of ten louis. I took back the ornament, for its pearls and diamonds did not tempt me, but I kept the portrait instead of the ten louis offered."

When the King asked me if I recollected the occurrence, I assured him that everything was perfectly true. Hereupon the King sent for the girl, who was immediately brought to his chamber. Such was her modesty and confusion that she dared not raise her eyes from the ground. The King spoke kindly to her, and gave her two thousand crowns to take her back to her own home. The Provost was instructed to restore all these different articles to her, and, as regarded

myself, I willingly let her have the portrait, though it was worth a good deal more than the ten louis mentioned.

When she got back to her own country and the news of her safe arrival was confirmed, the King sent her twenty thousand livres[1] as a dowry, which enabled her to make a marriage suitable to her good-natured disposition and blameless conduct.

She made a marked impression upon His Majesty, and he was often wont to speak about the chandelier on account of her, always alluding to her in kindly terms. If ever he returns to Holland, I am sure he will want to see her, either from motives of attachment or curiosity. Her name, if I remember rightly, was Flora.

1 Equivalent to 80,000 francs to-day.—EDITOR'S NOTE.

CHAPTER LVIII

THE OBSERVATORY—THE KING VISITS THE CARTHUSIANS —HOW A PAINTER WITH HIS BRUSH MAY SAVE A CONVENT—THE GUILTY MONK—STRANGE REVELATIONS—THE KING'S KINDNESS — THE CURATE OF SAINT-DOMINGO.

WHEN it was proposed to construct in Paris that handsome building called the Observatory, the King himself chose the site for this. Having a map of his capital before him, he wished this fine edifice to be in a direct line of perspective with the Luxembourg, to which it should eventually be joined by the demolition of the Carthusian Monastery, which filled a large gap.

The King was anxious that his idea should be carried out, but, whenever he mentioned it to M. Mansard and the other architects, they declared that it was a great pity to lose Lesueur's admirable frescoes in the cloisters, which would have to be destroyed if the King's vast scheme were executed.

One day His Majesty resolved to see for himself; and, without the least announcement of his arrival, he went to the Carthusian Monastery in the Rue d'Enfer. The King has great knowledge of art; he admired the whole series of wall-paintings, in which the life of Saint-Bruno is divinely set forth.[1]

"Father," said he to the prior who showed him round, "these simple, touching pictures are far beyond all that ever was told to me. My intention, I admit, was to move your institution elsewhere, so as to connect your spacious property with my Palace of the Luxembourg, but the horrible outrage which would have to be committed deters me; to the marvellous art of Lesueur you owe it that your convent remains intact."

The monk, overjoyed, expressed his gratitude to the King, and promised him the love and guardianship of Saint-Bruno in heaven.

Just then, service in the chapel was over, and the monks filed past two and two, never raising

1 By a new process these frescoes were subsequently transferred to canvas in 1800 or 1802, at which date the vast property of the Carthusian monks became part of the Luxembourg estates.—EDITOR'S NOTE.

their eyes from the gloomy pavement bestrewn with tombstones. The prior, clapping his hands, signalled them to stop, and then addressed them as follows:—

"My brethren, stay your progress for a moment, lift up your heads, bowed down by penance, and behold with awe the descendant of Saint-Louis, the august protector of this convent. Yes, our noble Sovereign himself has momentarily quitted his palace to visit this humble abode. On these quiet walls which hide our cells, he has sought to read the simple, touching story of the life of our saintly founder. The august son of Louis the Just has taken our dwelling-place and community under his immediate protection. Go to your cells and pray to God for this magnanimous Prince, for his children and successors in perpetuity."

As he said these flattering words, a monk, with flushed cheeks and mouth agape, flung himself down at the King's feet, beating his brow repeatedly upon the pavement, and exclaiming:

"Sire, forgive me, forgive me, guilty though I be. I crave your Royal pardon and pity."

The prior, somewhat confused, saw that some

important confession was about to be made, so he dismissed the others, and sent them back to their devotions. The prostrate monk, however, never thought of moving from his position. Perceiving that he was alone with the King, whose calm, gentle demeanour emboldened him, he begged anew for pardon with great energy and fervour. The King clearly saw that the penitent was some great evil-doer, and he promised forgiveness in somewhat ambiguous fashion. Then the monk rose and said:

"Your Majesty reigns to-day, and reigns gloriously. That is an amazing miracle, for countless incredible dangers of the direst sort have beset your cradle and menaced your youth. A Prince of your house, backed up by ambitious inferiors, resolved to wrest the crown from you, in order to get it for himself and his descendants. The Queen, your mother, full of heroic resolution, herself had energy enough to resist the cabal; but more than once her feet touched the very brink of the precipice, and more than once she nearly fell over it with her children.

"Noble qualities did this great Queen possess,

but at times she had too overweening a contempt for her enemies. Her disdain for my master, the young Cardinal, was once too bitter, and begot in this presumptuous prelate's heart undying hatred. Educated under the same roof as M. le Cardinal, with the same teachers and the same doctrines, I saw, as it were, with his eyes when I went out into the world, and marched beneath his banner when civil war broke out.

"Dreading the punishment for his temerity, this prelate decided that the sceptre should pass into other hands, and that the elder branch should become extinct. With this end in view, he made me write a pamphlet showing that you and your brother, the Prince, were not the King's sons; and subsequently he induced me to issue another, in which I affirmed on oath that the Queen, your mother, was secretly married to Cardinal Mazarin. Unfortunately these books met with astounding success, nor, though my tears fall freely, can they ever efface such vile pages.

"I am also guilty of another crime, Sire, and this weighs more heavily upon my heart. When the Queen-mother dexterously arranged for your

removal to Vincennes, she left in your bed at the Louvre a large doll. The rebels were aware of this when it was too late. I was ordered to ride post-haste with an escort in pursuit of your carriage; and I had to swear by the Holy Gospels that, if I could not bring you back to Paris, I would stab you to the heart.

"The enormity of my offence weighed heavily upon my spirit and my conscience. I conceived a horror for the Cardinal and withdrew to this convent. For many years I have undergone the most grievous penances, but I shall never make thorough expiation for my sins, and I hold myself to be as great a criminal as at first, so long as I have not obtained pardon from my King."

"Are you in Holy Orders?" asked the King, gently.

"No, Sire; I feel unworthy to take them," replied the Carthusian, in dejected tones.

"Let him be ordained as soon as possible," said His Majesty to the prior. "The monk's keen repentance touches me; his brain is still excitable; it needs fresh air and change. I will appoint him to a curacy at St. Domingo, and desire him to

leave for that place at the earliest opportunity. Do not forget this."

The monk again prostrated himself before the King, overwhelming him with blessings, and these royal commands were in due course executed. So it came about that Lesueur's frescoes led to startling revelations, and enabled the Carthusians to keep their splendid property intact, ungainly though this was and out of place.

CHAPTER LIX

JOURNEY TO POITOU—THE MAYOR AND THE SHERIFFS OF ORLEANS—THE MARQUISE'S MODESTY—THE SERENADE—THE ABBEY OF FONTEVRAULT—FAMILY COUNCIL—DUCHOMANIA—A LETTER TO THE KING—THE BISHOP OF POITIERS—THE YOUNG VICAR—RATHER GIVE HIM A REGIMENT—THE FÊTE AT THE CONVENT—THE PRESENTATION—THE REVOLT—A GRAND EXAMPLE.

THE Abbess of Fontevrault, who, when a mere nun, could never bear her profession, now loved it with all her heart, doubtless because of the authority and freedom which she possessed, being at liberty to go or come at will, and, as absolute mistress of her actions, accountable to no one for these.

She sent me her confidential woman, one of the "travelling sisters" of the community, to tell me privately that the Principality of Talmont was going to be sold, and to offer me her help at this important juncture.

Her letter, duly tied up and sealed, begged me to be bold and use my authority, if necessary, in order to induce the King at last to give his approval

and consent. "What!" she wrote, "my dear sister; you have given birth to eight children, the youngest of which is a marvel, and you have not yet got your reward. All your children enjoy the rank of Prince, and you, their mother, are exempt from such distinction! What is the King thinking about? Does it add to his dignity, honour and glory that you should still be merely a petty Marchioness? I ask again, what is the King thinking of?"

In conclusion my sister invited me to pay a visit to her charming abbey. "We have much to tell you," said she, "and such brief absence is needful to you, so as to test the King's affection. Your sort of temperament suits him, your talk amuses him; in fact, your society is absolutely essential to him; the distance from Versailles to Saumur would seem to him as far off as the uttermost end of his kingdom. He will send courier upon courier to you; each of his letters will be a sort of entreaty, and you have only just got to express your firm intention and desire to be created a Duchess or a Princess, and, my dear sister, it will forthwith be done."

For two days I trained the travelling nun from Fontevrault in her part, and then I suddenly presented her to the King. She had the honour of explaining to His Majesty that she had left the Abbess sick and ailing, and informed him that my sister was most anxious to see me again, and that she hoped His Majesty would not object to my paying her a short visit. For a moment the King hesitated; then he asked me if I thought such a change of urgent necessity. I replied that the news of Madame de Mortemart's ill-health had greatly affected me, and I promised not to be away more than a week.

The King accordingly instructed the Marquis de Louvois[1] to make all due arrangements for my journey, and two days afterwards, my sister, de Thianges, her daughter, the Duchesse de Nevers, and myself, set out at night for Poitiers.

The royal relays took us as far as Orleans, after which we had post-horses, but specially chosen and well-harnessed. Couriers in advance of us had given all necessary orders to the officials

1 Minister of War, and Inspector-General of Posts and Relays.—EDITOR'S NOTE.

and governors, so that we were provided with an efficient military escort along the road, and were as safe as if driving through Paris.

At Orleans, the mayor and sheriffs in full dress presented themselves at our carriage window, and were about to deliver an address "to please the King," but I thought such a proceeding ill-timed, and my niece de Nevers told these magnates that we were travelling *incognito*.

Crowds collected below our balcony. Madame de Thianges thought they were going to serenade me, but I distinctly heard sounds of hissing. My niece de Nevers was greatly upset; she would eat no supper, but began to cry. "What are you worrying about?" quoth I to this excitable young person. "Don't you see that we are stopping the night on the estates of the Princess Palatine,[1] and that it is to her exquisite breeding that we owe compliments of this kind?"

Next morning at daybreak we drove on, and the day after we reached Fontevrault. The Abbess, accompanied by her entire community, came to

1 The boorish Bavarian Princess, the Duc d'Orléans' second wife.—EDITOR'S NOTE.

welcome us at the main gate, and her surpliced chaplains offered me holy water.

After rest and refreshment, we made a detailed survey of her little empire, and everywhere observed traces of her good management and tact. Rules had been made more lenient, while not relaxed; the revenues had increased; everywhere embellishments, contentment, and well-being were noticeable.

After praising the Abbess as she deserved, we talked a little about the Talmont Principality. My sister was inconsolable. The Tremouilles had come into property which restored their shattered fortunes; the Principality was no longer for sale; all thought of securing it must be given up.

Strange to say, I at once felt consoled by such news. Rightly to explain this feeling, I ought, perhaps, to make an avowal. A grand and brilliant title had, indeed, ever been the object of my ambition; but I thought that I deserved such a distinction personally, *for my own sake*, and I was always wishing that my august friend would create a title specially in my favour. I had often hinted at such a thing in various ways, and,

full as he is of wit and penetration, he always listened to my covert suggestions, and was perfectly aware of my desire. And yet, magnificently generous as any mortal well could be, he never granted my wish. Anyone else but myself would have been tired, disheartened even; but at Court one must never be discouraged nor give up the game. The atmosphere is rife with vicissitude and change. Monotony would seem to have made there its home; yet no day is quite like another. What one hopes for is all too long in coming: and what one never foresees, on a sudden comes to pass.

We took counsel together as to the best thing to be done. Madame de Thianges said to me: "My dear Athénais, you have the elegance of the Mortemarts, the fine perception and ready wit that distinguishes them, but, strangely enough, you have not their energy, nor the firm will necessary for the conduct of weighty matters. The King does not treat you like a great friend, like a distinguished friend, like the mother of his son, the Duc du Maine; he treats you like a province that he has conquered, on which he levies tax after tax; that

is all. Pray recollect, my sister, that for ten years you have played a leading part on the grand stage. Your beauty, to my surprise, has been preserved to you, notwithstanding your numerous confinements and the fatigues of your position. Profit by the present juncture, and do not let the chance slip. You must write to the King and, on some pretext or other, ask for another week's leave. You must tell him plainly that you have been Marchioness long enough, and that the moment has come at last for you to have the *impériale*,[1] and sign your name in proper style."

Her advice was considered sound, but the Abbess, taking into account the King's susceptibility, decided that it would not do for me to write myself about a matter so important as this. The Marquise de Thianges, in some way or other, had got the knack of plain-speaking, so that a letter of hers would be more readily excused. Thus it was settled that she should write; and write she did. I give her letter verbatim, as it

1 The distinctive mark of Duchesses was the *impériale*; that is, a rich and costly hammer-cloth of embroidered velvet, edged with gold, which covered the roofs of ducal equipages.—EDITOR'S NOTE.

will please my readers; and they will agree with me that I could never have touched this delicate subject so happily myself.

"SIRE,—Madame de Montespan had the honour of writing one or two notes to you during our journey, and now she rests all day long in this vast and pleasant abbey, where Your Majesty's name is held in as great veneration as elsewhere, being beloved as deeply as at Versailles. Madame de Mortemart has caused one of the best portraits of Your Majesty, done by Mignard, to be brought hither from Paris, and this magnificent personage in Royal robes is placed beneath an amaranth-coloured daïs, richly embroidered with gold, at the extreme end of a vast hall, which bears the name of our illustrious and well-beloved Monarch. Your privileges are great, in truth, Sire. Here you are, installed in this pious and secluded retreat, where never mortal may set foot. Before you, beside you daily, you may contemplate the multitude of modest virgins who look at you and admire you, becoming all of them attached to you without wishing it, perhaps without knowing it, even.

"Surely, Sire, your penetration is a most admirable thing. After your first interview with her, you considered our dear Abbess to be a woman of capacity and talent. You rightly appreciated her, for nothing can be compared to the perfect order that prevails in her house. She is active and industrious without sacrificing her position and her dignity in the slightest.

Like yourself, she can judge of things in their entirety, and examine them in every little detail; like yourself, she knows how to command obedience and affection, desiring nothing but that which is just and reasonable. In a word, Sire, Madame de Mortemart has the secret of convincing her subordinates that she is acting *solely in their interests*, a supreme mission, in sooth, among men; and my sister really has no other desire nor ambition—to this we can testify.

"Upon our return, which for our liking can never be too soon, we will acquaint Your Majesty with the slight *authorised* mortification which we had to put up with at Orleans. We are in possession of certain information regarding this, and Your Majesty will have ample means of throwing a light upon the subject. As for the magistrates, they behaved most wonderfully; they had an address all ready for us, but Madame de Montespan would not listen to it, saying that 'such honours are only meet for you and for your children.' Such modesty on my sister's part is in keeping with her great intelligence, I had almost said her genius. But in this matter I was not wholly of her opinion. It seemed to me, Sire, that, in refusing the homage offered to her by these worthy magnates, she, so to speak, disowned the rank ensured to her by your favour. While the Marquise enjoys your noble affection, she is no ordinary personage. She has her seat in your own Chapel Royal, so in travelling she has a right to special honour. By your choice of her, you have made her notable; in giving her your heart, you have made her a part of yourself. By giving birth

to your children, she has acquired her rank at Court, in society and in history. Your Majesty intends her to be considered and respected; the escorts of cavalry along the highroads are sufficient proof of that.

"All France, Sire, is aware of your munificence and of your princely generosity. Shall I tell you of the amazement of the provincials at noticing that the ducal housings are absent from my sister's splendid coach? Yes, I have taken upon myself to inform you of this surprise, and, knowing how greatly Athénais desires this omission to be repaired, I went so far as to promise that Your Majesty would cause this to be done forthwith. It must be done, Sire; the Marquise loves you as much as it is possible for you to be loved; of this, all that she has sacrificed is a proof. But while dearly loving you, she fears to appear importunate, and, were it not for my respectful freedom of speech, perhaps you would still be ignorant of that which she most fervently desires.

"What we *all three of us* ask is but a slight thing for Your Majesty, who, with a single word, can create a thousand nobles and princes. The Kings, your ancestors, used their glory in making their lovers illustrious. The Valois built temples and palaces in their honour. You, greater than all the Valois, should not let their example suffice. And I am sure that you will do for the mother of the Duc du Maine what the young Prince himself would do for her if you should happen to forget.

"Your Majesty's most humble servant,

"MARQUISE DE THIANGES."

To the Abbess and myself, this ending seemed rather too sarcastic, but Madame de Thianges was most anxious to let it stand. There was no way of softening or glossing it over; so the letter went off, just as she had written it.

It so happened that the Bishop of Poitiers was in his diocese at the time. He came to pay me a visit, and ask me if I could get an abbey for his nephew, who, though extremely young, already acted as Vicar-General for him. "I would willingly get him a whole regiment," I replied, "provided M. de Louvois be of those that are my friends. As for the benefices, they depend, as you know, upon the Père de la Chaise, and I don't think he would be willing to grant me a favour."

"Permit me to assure you, madam, that in this respect you are in error," replied the Bishop. "Père de la Chaise respects you and honours you, and only speaks of you in such terms. What distresses him is to see that you have an aversion for him. Let me write to him, and say that my nephew has had the honour of being presented to you, and that you hoped he might have a wealthy abbey to enable him to bear the privations of his calling."

The young Vicar-General was good-looking, and of graceful presence. He had that distinction of manner which causes the priesthood to be held in honour, and that amenity of address which makes the law to be obeyed. My sisters began to take a fancy to him, and recommended him to me. I wrote to Père de la Chaise myself, and, instead of a mere abbey, we asked for a bishopric for him.

It was my intention to organise a brilliant fête for the Fontevrault ladies, and invite all the nobility of the neighbourhood. We talked of this to the young Vicar, who highly approved of my plan, and albeit monsieur his uncle thought such a scheme somewhat contrary to rule and to what he termed the proprieties, we made use of his nephew, the young priest, as a lever; and M. de Poitiers at last consented to everything.

The Fontevrault gardens are one of the most splendid sights in all the country round. We chose the large alley as our chief entertainment hall, and the trees were all illuminated as in my park at Clagny, or at Versailles. There was no dancing, on account of the nuns, but during

our repast there was music, and a concert and fireworks afterwards. The fête ended with a performance of *Geneviève de Brabant,* a grand spectacular pantomime, played to perfection by certain gentry of the neighbourhood; it made a great impression upon all the nuns and novices.

Before going down into the gardens the Abbess wished to present me formally to all the nuns, as well as to those persons it had pleased her to invite. Imagine her astonishment! Three nuns were absent, and, despite our entreaties and the commands of their superiors, they persisted in their rebellion and their refusal. They set up to *keep rules* before all things, and observe the duties of their religion, lying thus to their Abbess and their conscience. It was all mere spite. Of this there can be no doubt, for one of these refractory creatures, as it transpired, was a cousin of the Marquis de Lauzun, *my so-called victim;* while the other two were near relatives of Mademoiselle de Mauléon, an intimate friend of M. de Meaux.

In spite of these three silly absentees, we enjoyed ourselves greatly, and had much innocent amusement; while they, who could watch us from

their windows, were probably mad with rage to think they were not of our number.

My sister complained of them to the Bishop of Poitiers, who severely blamed them for such conduct; and seeing that he could not induce them to offer me an apology, sent them away to three different convents.

CHAPTER LX

THE PAGE-DAUPHIN — A BILLET FROM THE KING— MADAME DE MAINTENON'S LETTER — THE KING AS AVENGER—HIS SENTENCE ON THE MURDERERS.

THE great liberty which we enjoyed at Fontevrault, compared with the interminable bondage of Saint-Germain or Versailles, made the abbey ever seem more agreeable to me; and Madame de Thianges asked me in sober earnest "if I no longer loved the King."

"Of course I do," was my answer; "but may one not love oneself just a little bit, too? To me, health is life; and I assure you at Fontevrault, my dear sister, I sleep most soundly, and have quite got rid of all my nervous attacks and headaches."

We were just talking thus when Madame de Mortemart entered my room, and introduced young Chamilly, the Page-Dauphin,[1] who brought with

1 The chief page-in-waiting bore the title of Page-Dauphin.—EDITOR'S NOTE.

him a letter from the King. He also had one for me from Madame de Maintenon, rallying me upon my absence and giving me news of my children. The King's letter was quite short, but a king's note such as that is worth a whole pile of commonplace letters. I transcribe it here:—

"I am jealous; an unusual thing for me. And I am much vexed, I confess, with Madame de Mortemart, who might have chosen a very different moment to be ill. I am ignorant as to the nature of her malady, but if it be serious, and of those which soon grow more dangerous, she has played me a very sorry trick in sending for you to act as her nurse or her physician. Pray tell her, madam, that you are of no good whatever as a nurse, being extremely hasty and impatient in everything; while as regards medical skill, you are still further from the mark, since you have never yet been able to understand your own ailments, nor even explain these with the least clearness. I must ask the Abbess momentarily to suspend her sufferings and come to Versailles, where all my physicians shall treat her with infinite skill; and, to oblige me, will cure her, as they know how much I esteem and like her. Farewell, my ladies three, who in your friendship are but as one. I should like to be there to make a fourth. Madame de Maintenon, who loves you sincerely, will give you news of your little family and of Saint-Germain. Her letter and mine will be brought to you and delivered by the young Comte de

Chamilly. Send him back to me at once, and don't let him see your novices or your nuns, else he will not want to return to me.

"LOUIS."

Madame de Maintenon's letter was not couched in the same playfully mocking tone; though a Marchioness, she felt the distance that there was between herself and me; besides, she always knows exactly what is the proper thing to do. The Abbess, who is an excellent judge, thought this letter excellently written. She wanted to have a copy of it, which made me determine to preserve it. Here it is, a somewhat more voluminous epistle than that of the King:—

"I promised you, madam, that I would inform you as often as possible of all that interests you here, and now I keep my promise, being glad to say that I have only pleasant news to communicate. His Majesty is wonderfully well, and though annoyed at your journey, he has hardly lost any of his gaiety, as seemingly he hopes to have you back again in a day or two.

"Mademoiselle de Nantes declares that she would have behaved very well in the coach, and that she is a nearer relation to you than the Duchesse de Nevers, and that it was very unfair not to take her with you

this time. In order to comfort her the Duc du Maine has discovered an expedient which greatly amuses us, and never fails of its effect. He tells her how absolutely necessary it is for her proper education that she should be placed in a convent, and then adds, in a serious tone, that if she had been taken to Fontevrault she would never have come back!

"'Oh, if that is the case,' she answered, 'why, I am not jealous of the Duchesse de Nevers.'

"The day after your departure the Court took up its quarters at Saint-Germain, where we shall probably remain for another week. You know, madam, how fond His Majesty is of the Louis Treize Belvedere, and the telescope erected by this Monarch—one of the best ever made hitherto. As if by inspiration, the King turned this instrument to the left towards that distant bend which the Seine makes round the verge of the Chatou woods. His Majesty, who observes everything, noticed two bathers in the river, who, apparently, were trying to teach their much younger companion, a lad of fourteen or fifteen, to swim; doubtless, they had hurt him, for he got away from their grasp, and escaped to the river-bank, to reach his clothes and dress himself. They tried to coax him back into the water, but he did not relish such treatment; by his gestures it was plain that he desired no further lessons. Then the two bathers jumped out of the river, and, as he was putting on his shirt, dragged him back into the water, and forcibly held him under till he was drowned.

"When they had committed this crime, and

their victim was murdered, they cast uneasy glances at either river-bank, and the heights of Saint-Germain. Believing that no one had knowledge of their deed, they put on their clothes, and, with all a murderer's glee depicted on their evil countenances, they walked along the bank in the direction of the castle. The King instantly rode off in pursuit, accompanied by five or six musketeers; he got ahead of them, and soon turned back and met them.

"'Sirs,' said he to them, 'when you went away you were three in number; what have you done with your comrade?' This question, asked in a firm voice, disconcerted them somewhat at first, but they soon replied that their companion wanted to have a swim in the river, and that they had left him higher up the stream near the corner of the forest, close to where his clothes and linen made a white spot on the bank.

"On hearing this answer the King gave orders for them to be bound and brought back by the soldiery to the old château, where they were shut up in separate rooms. His Majesty, filled with indignation, sent for the High Provost and recounting to him what took place before his eyes, requested him to try the culprits there and then. The Marquis, however, is always scrupulous to excess; he begged the King to reflect that at such a great distance, and viewed through a telescope, things might have seemed somewhat different from what they actually were, and that, instead of forcibly holding their companion under the water, perhaps the two bathers were endeavouring to bring him to the surface.

"'No, sir, no,' replied His Majesty; 'they dragged him into the river against his will, and I saw their struggles and his when they thrust him under the water.'

"'But, Sire,' replied this punctilious personage, 'our criminal law requires the testimony of two witnesses, and Your Majesty, all-powerful though you be, can only furnish that of one.'

"'Sir,' replied the King, gently, 'I authorise you in passing sentence to state that you heard the joint testimony of the King of France and the King of Navarre.'

"Seeing that this failed to convince the judge, His Majesty grew impatient and said to the old Marquis: 'King Louis IX., my ancestor, sometimes administered justice himself in the wood at Vincennes; I will to-day follow his august example and administer justice at Saint-Germain.'

"The Throne Room was at once got ready by his order. Twenty notable burgesses of the town were summoned to the castle, and the lords and ladies sat with these upon the benches. The King, wearing his orders, took his seat when the two prisoners were placed in the dock.

"By their contradictory statements, ever increasing embarrassment, and unveracious assertions, the jury were soon convinced of their guilt. The unhappy youth was their brother, and had inherited property from their mother, he being her child by a second husband. So these monsters murdered him for revenge and greed. The King sentenced them to be bound

hand and foot, and flung into the river in the self-same place 'where they killed their young brother Abel.'

"When they saw His Majesty leaving his throne, they threw themselves at his feet, implored his pardon, and confessed their hideous crime. The King, pausing a moment, thanked God that their conscience had forced such confession from them, and then remitted the sentence of confiscation only. They were executed before the setting of that sun which had witnessed their crime, and the next day, that is, yesterday evening, the three bodies, united once more by fate, were found floating about two leagues from Saint-Germain, under the willows at the edge of the river near Poissy.

"Orders were instantly given for their separate interment. The youngest was brought back to Saint-Germain, where the King wished him to have a funeral befitting his innocence and untimely fate. All the military attended it.

"Forgive me, madam, for all these lengthy details; we have all been so much upset by this dreadful occurrence, and can talk of nothing else—in fact, it will furnish matter for talk for a long while yet.

"I sincerely hope that by this time Madame de Mortemart has completely recovered. I agree with His Majesty that, in doctoring, you have not had much experience; still, friendship acts betimes as a most potent talisman, and the heart of the Abbess is of those that in absence pines, but which in the presence of some loved one revives.

"She has deigned to grant me a little place in her esteem; pray tell her that this first favour has

somewhat spoiled me, and that now I ask for more than this, for a place in her affections. Madame de Thianges and Madame de Nevers are aware of my respect and attachment for them, and they approve of this, for they have engraved their names and crests on my plantain-trees at Maintenon. Such inscriptions are a bond to bind us, and, if no mischance befall, these trees, as I hope, will survive me.

"I am, madam, &c.,

"MAINTENON."

CHAPTER LXI

MADEMOISELLE D'AMURANDE — THE MARRIED NUN — THE LETTER TO THE SUPERIOR — MONSEIGNEUR'S DISCOURSE — THE ABDUCTION — A LETTER FROM THE KING — BEWARE OF THE GOVERNESS — WE LEAVE FONTEVRAULT.

AMONG the novices at Fontevrault there was a most interesting, charming young person, who gave Madame de Mortemart a good deal of anxiety, as she thought her still undecided as to the holy profession she was about to adopt. This interested me greatly, and evoked my deepest sympathy.

The night of our concert and garden fête she sang to please the Abbess, but there were tears in her voice. I was touched beyond expression, and going up to her at the bend of one of the quickset-hedges, I said: "You are unhappy, mademoiselle; I feel a deep interest for you. I will ask Madame de Mortemart to let you come and read to me; then we can talk as we like. I should like to help you if I can."

She moved away at once, fearing to be observed, and the following day I met her in my sister's room.

"Your singing and articulation are wonderful, mademoiselle," said I, before the Abbess; "would you be willing to come and read to me for an hour every day? I have left my secretary at Versailles, and I am beginning to miss her much."

Madame de Mortemart thanked me for my kindly intentions towards the young novice, who, from that time forward, was placed at my disposal.

The reading had no other object than to gain her confidence, and as soon as we were alone I bade her tell me all. After brief hesitation, the poor child thus began:—

"In a week's time, a most awful ceremony takes place in this monastery. The term of my novitiate has already expired, and, had it not been for the distractions caused by your visit, I should have already been obliged to take this awful oath and make my vows.

"Madame de Mortemart is gentle and kind (no wonder! she is your sister), but she has decided that I am to be one of her nuns, and nothing on

earth can induce her to change her mind. If this fatal decree be executed, I shall never live to see this year of desolation reach its close. Perhaps I may fall dead at the feet of the Bishop who ordains us.

"They would have me give to God—who does not need it—my whole life as a sacrifice. But, madam, I cannot give my God this life of mine, as, four years ago, I surrendered it wholly to someone else. Yes, madam," said she, bursting into tears, "I am the lawful wife of the Vicomte d'Olbruze, my cousin-german.

"Of this union, planned and approved by my dear mother herself, a child was born, which my ruthless father refuses to recognise, and which kindly peasants are bringing up in the depths of the woods.

"My dear, good mother was devotedly fond of my lover, who was her nephew. From our very cradles she had always destined us for each other. And she persisted in making this match, despite her husband, whose fortune she had immensely increased, and one day, during his absence, we were legally united by our family priest in the castle

chapel. My father, who was away at sea, came back soon afterwards. He was enraged at my mother's disobedience, and in his fury attempted to stab her with his own hand. He made several efforts to put an end to her existence, and the general opinion in my home is that he was really the author of her death.

"Devotedly attached to my husband by ties of love no less than of duty, I fled with him to his uncle's, an old Knight-Commander of Malta, whose sole heir he was. My father, with others, pursued us thither, and scaled the walls of our retreat by night, resolved to kill his nephew first and me afterwards. Roused by the noise of the ruffians, my husband seized his firearms. Three of his assailants he shot from the balcony, and my father, disguised as a common man, received a volley in the face, which destroyed his eyesight. The Parliament of Rennes took up the matter. My husband thought it best not to put in an appearance, and after the evidence of sundry witnesses called at random, a warrant for his arrest as a defaulter was issued, a death penalty being attached thereto.

"Ever since that time my husband has been

wandering about in disguise from province to province. Doomed to solitude in our once lovely château, my father forced me to take the veil in this convent, promising that if I did so, he would not bring my husband to justice.

"Perhaps, madam, if the King were truly and faithfully informed of all these things, he would have compassion for my grief, and right the injustice meted out to my unlucky husband."

After hearing this sad story, I clearly saw that, in some way or other, we should have to induce Madame de Mortemart to postpone the ceremony of taking the vow, and I afterwards determined to put these vagaries on the part of the law before my good friend President de Nesmond, who was the very man to give us good advice, and suggest the right remedy.

As for the King, I did not deem it fit that he should be consulted in the matter. Of course I look upon him as a just and wise Prince, but he is the slave of form. In great families, he does not like to hear of marriages to which the father has not given formal consent; moreover, I did not forget about the gun-shot which blinded the

gentleman, and made him useless for the rest of his life. The King who is devoted to his nobles, would never have pronounced in favour of the Vicomte, unless he happened to be in a particularly good humour. Altogether, it was a risky thing.

I deeply sympathised with Mademoiselle d'Amurande in her trouble, and assured her of my goodwill and protection, but I begged her to approve my course of action, though taken independently of the King. She willingly left her fate in my hands, and I bade her write my sister the following note :—

"MADAM, — You know the vows that bind me; they are sacred, having been plighted at the foot of the altar. Do not persist, I entreat you, do not persist in claiming the solemn declaration of my vows. You are here to command the Virgins of the Lord, but among these I have no right to a place. I am a mother, although so young, and the Holy Scriptures tell me every day that Agar, the kindly-hearted, may not forsake her darling Ishmael."

I happened to be with Madame de Mortemart when one of the aged sisters brought her this letter. On reading it she was much affected. I

feigned ignorance, and asked her kindly what was the reason of her trouble. She wished to hide it; but I insisted, and at last persuaded her to let me see the note. I read it calmly and with reflection, and afterwards said to the Abbess:

"What! You, sister, whose distress and horror I witnessed when our stern parents shut you up in a cloister—are you now going to impose like fetters upon a young and interesting person, who dreads them, and rejects them as once you rejected them?"

Madame de Mortemart replied: "I was young then, and without experience, when I showed such childish repugnance as that of which you speak. At that age one knows nothing of religion nor of the eternal verities. Only the world, with its frivolous pleasures, is then before one's eyes; and the spectacle blinds our view, even our view of heaven. Later on I deplored such resistance, which so grieved my family; and when I saw you at Court, brilliant and adored, I assure you, my dear Marquise, that this convent and its solitude seemed to me a thousand times more desirable than the habitation of kings."

"You only speak thus philosophically," I replied, "because your lot happens to have undergone such a change. From a slave, you have become an absolute and sovereign mistress. The book of rules is in your hands; you turn over its leaves wherever you like; you open it at whatever page suits you; and if the book should chance to give you a severe rebuke, you never let others know this. Human nature was ever thus. No, no, madam; you can never make one believe that a religious life is in itself such an attractive one, that you would gladly resume it if the dignities of your position as an abbess were suddenly wrested from you and given to someone else."

"Well, well, if that is so," said the Abbess, reddening, "I am quite ready to send in my resignation, and so return you your liberality."

"I don't ask you for an abbey which you got from the King," I rejoined, smiling; "but the favour which I ask and solicit you can and ought to grant. Mademoiselle d'Amurande points out to you in formal and significant terms that she cannot enrol herself among the Virgins of the Lord, and that the gentle Agar of Holy Writ may not forsake

Ishmael. Such a confession plainly hints at an attachment which religion cannot violate nor destroy, else our religion would be a barbarous one, and contrary to nature.

"Since God has brought me to this convent, and by chance I have got to know and appreciate this youthful victim, I shall give her my compassion and help — I, who have no necessity to make conversions by force in order to add to the number of my community. If I have committed any grave offence in the eyes of God, I trust that He will pardon me in consideration of the good work that I desire to do. I shall write to the King, and Mademoiselle d'Amurande shall not make her vows until His Majesty commands her to do so."

This last speech checkmated my sister. She at once became gentle, sycophantic, almost caressing in manner, and assured me that the ceremony of taking the vow would be indefinitely postponed, although the Bishop of Luçon had already prepared his homily, and invitations had been issued to the nobility.

Madame de Mortemart is the very embodiment

of subtlety and cunning. I saw that she only wanted to gain time in order to carry out her scheme. I did not let myself be hoodwinked by her promises, but went straight to work, being determined to have my own way.

Hearing from Mademoiselle d'Amurande that her friend and ally, the old commander, was still living, I was glad to know that she had in him such a staunch supporter. "It is the worthy commander," said I, "who must be as a father to you, until I have got the sentence of the first Parliament cancelled." Then we arranged that I should get her away with me from the convent, as there seemed to be little or no difficulty about this.

Accordingly, three days afterwards, I dressed her in a most elegant costume of my niece's. We went out in the morning for a drive, and the nuns at the gateway bowed low, as usual, when my carriage passed, never dreaming of such a thing as abduction.

That evening the whole convent seemed in a state of uproar. Madame de Mortemart, with flaming visage, sought to stammer out her re-

proaches. But as there was no law to prevent my action, she had to hide her vexation and behave as if nothing had happened.

The following year I wrote and told her that the judgment of the Rennes Parliament had been cancelled by the Grand Council, as it was based on conflicting evidence. The blind Comte d'Amurande had died of rage, and the young couple, who came into all his property, were eternally grateful to me, and for ever showered blessings upon my head.

The Abbess wrote back to say that she shared my satisfaction at so happy a conclusion, and that Madame d'Olbruse's disappearance from Fontevrault had scarcely been noticed.

The Marquise de Thianges, whose ideas regarding such matters were precisely the same as my own, confined herself to stating that I had not told her a word about it. She spoke the truth; for the enterprise was not of such difficulty that I needed anyone to help me.

On the twelfth day, as we were about to leave Fontevrault, I received another letter from the King, which was as follows:—

"As the pain in your knee continues, and the Bourbonne waters have been recommended to you, I beg you, madam, to profit by being in their vicinity, and to go and try their effect. Mademoiselle de Nantes is in fairly good health, yet it looks as if a return of her fluxion were likely. Five or six pimples have appeared on her face, and there is the same redness of the arms as last year. I shall send her to Bourbonne; your maids and the governess will accompany her. The Prince de Condé, who is in office there, will show you every attention. I would rather see you a little later on, in good health, than a little sooner, and ailing.

"My kindest messages to Madame de Thianges, the Abbess, and all those who show you regard and sympathy. Madame de Nevers might invite you to stay with her; on her return I will not forget such obligation. "LOUIS."

We left Fontevrault after a stay of fifteen days; to the nuns and novices it seemed more like fifteen minutes, but to Madame de Mortemart, fifteen long years. Yet that did not prevent her from tenderly embracing me, nor from having tears in her eyes when the time came for us to take coach and depart.

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